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DEADWOOD DICK'S BIG DEAL

OR,
THE GOLD BRICK OF OREGON.



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OR

THE GOLD BRICK OF OREGON.



By EDWARD L. WHEELER.

Author of "Deadwood Dick" Novels, "Rosebud Rob"
Novels, "Denver Doll" Novels, Etc.

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DEARBORN PICK-UP DEALER

OR

THE GOLD RICE OF OREGON

BY EDWARD J. WHEELER

Author of "The Oregon Trail" and "The Oregon Trail"

Illustrated by J. M. W. WHEELER

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CHAPTER I.

"Hands Up!"

"Hands up thar, an' halt!"

Stern and peremptory. came the challenge in a deep voice accustomed to command.

Through a deep, yet picturesque canyon, a horseman was leisurely riding when the challenge rung out, and being a man inured to the many startling peculiarities of the wild west, and having on more than one occasion heard the significant order of the mountain footpad, he made no delay in throwing up his hands—especially when he saw a masked man with leveled rifle step from behind a huge boulder.

The lone traveler's horse stopped of its own accord, as if well satisfied that there was no use bucking against the "drap."

The horseman was a stranger in those parts, but he doubted not that his challenger was a common footpad, who made his "stake" at pouncing on lone wayfarers and robbing them of their handy cash.

The stranger was a man of rather extraordinary appearance, even for that wild section of country, where extremes made up the population.

He was a man of medium stature, and well-modeled figure. Every limb and every motion denoted great activ-

ity and prodigious strength when necessity required it.

His face was one hard to read in the way of feature, because of a luxuriant long silken beard of the blackest hue, and a heavy mustache of the same color.

For a more magnificent hirsute growth, man could not wish.

The nose was well-defined, the forehead high and pure as alabaster; the eyes dark and magnetic.

His well-shaped head was covered with well-trimmed dark hair, surmounted by a prairie white hat of the broad-brim "slouch" order; his hands were small and white as a woman's; his dress was that of a private citizen, consisting of black diagonal cloth, a b'iled shirt with a large diamond blazing upon the bosom; top-boots of patent leather, and a belt about his waist which contained only a single revolver.

His saddle and horse trappings showed the good taste of the owner—all being of the best material.

He had the bearing of a gentleman of about forty years of age. The road-agent who put in an appearance was roughly dressed, and the lower part of his face was bearded. He was well armed; and the piercing gaze that swept through the eye-holes of his mask, showed that he was a man of strong passions.

He advanced slowly toward the traveler, keeping the rifle on a level with his eye; then, when but a few paces intervened between him and the stranger, he suddenly and by a lightning movement, dropped the rifle and snatched a revolver from his belt.

The man on horseback uttered a dry laugh.

"A military move, that, executed with perfection!" he said. "I presume the army has lost a valuable private, while the public highways has found one, eh?"

"You are wrong. I never belonged to the army," the road-agent said, grimly. "On the contrary, I have been an honest miner all my life, Cleveland St. Cecil!"

The stranger started.

How knew this man his name?

The road-agent noted this surprise, and laughed.

"You are startled, eh, to hear your name, when you thought yourself a stranger? Well, you are excusable. I know you, as well as I know my meal hours. Employed by the Raymond Mining and Milling Company, you are

now on your way to Right Bower Camp, with something like fifteen thousand dollars on your person, which sum you received from old Farmer, of Helena, who owns the most shares in the company. Never found out how you came to get in with old Farmer; but, that matters nothing. You're goin' to Right Bower—not?"

"That is where I am aiming for," was the calm answer, for the stranger's dark orbs were now blazing with surprised anger.

"Of course you are," the road-agent went on, coolly. "Now, old Farmer, havin' other business, can't get down to the Bower often, an' tho' he has controllin' interest, a kink in his mind has caused him to believe that he ain't gittin' used squar'; the other two partners, Raymond and Chester, aire gittin' rich, an' old Farmer's takin' w'ot's left. So thar's a fuss, an' a receiver's sent down to take charge o' affairs, an' see that fair divy is made, hereafter. Ain't I right?"

"You seem to be remarkably well posted!" Cleve St. Cecil replied. "But, how long do you propose to talk, here? I am anxious to be moving."

"Ye need not wanten git to Right Bower before ye arrive thar, young man. You'll not find it a werry healthy place, for thar's no doctors there. As fer my gab, I'll muzzle that, direct. I know'd ye was comin', and came tew hev a tork. Don't want old Farmer's money—don't owe him no grudge."

"Oh! you don't? I am somewhat relieved to hear that," and St. Cecil laughed.

"No; I ain't no road-agent. I know'd ye war goin' to Right Bower as receiver for the company, an' I jest wanted to see ye, first, and ax ye ef yer family undertakes knows yer size o' box."

"You mean to insinuate that I'll need one, do you?"

"Jest that. Ef you go to Right Bower, I'd advise your friends to begin to make up their mournin' goods. The long an' short of it is, pard, you're onwelcome at the Bower, 'ca'se thar's them as don't want no receiver."

"Perhaps not. However, I understood the case before I was appointed to the position. Thanking you for your warning, allow me to advise you that I am fully prepared to take charge of the job, and keep it, so long as Mr. Farmer's interests are to be looked after."

"You're plucky—I know that better than 'most any living man. I've know'd ye many a year. But you don't know Right Bower. There ain't a harder, cusseder, meaner camp on God's footstool, and a friendless stranger there will be in poor quarters. But that's neither here nor thar. I've left Right Bower fer good. D'ye see that?"

He took a piece of paper from his pocket, unfolded it, and handed it to St. Cecil, who scrutinized it with curiosity.

It was a rough but very legible map of the town.

St. Cecil examined this with some interest.

"Well, do you see what's on thar?" the man asked.

"I do. I suppose the round marks are supposed to represent shanties, stores, and so forth?"

"Jest that. Ye see my shanty, marked 'Lee's cabin'?"

"Yes."

"Good. Kinder b'low town, on the east, you note?"

"Exactly."

"Well, now I'll come to the point. That's whar I lived, till the Gold Brick came an' stole my heart. I don't look much like a man who war mixed up in a love affair, mebbe, but I am; an' as I've l'arned a most 'portant thing, I've made up my mind to shuffle off this mortal coil!"

St. Cecil laughed sarcastically.

"What! the love for one woman won't drive you to suicide?" he exclaimed.

"Just that—nothin' else. To-morrow, I, Crazy Chet Rossitur, will be playin' seven-up wi' the angels, instead o' at the Palace in Right Bower."

"You are mad, man!"

"No, I am not. I am as sane as you were, when you tuk the job o' goin' to that town. I shall be dead as a herring to-morrow."

"Pshaw! Enough of this. What does it all concern me?"

"More than you imagine. Cleveland St. Cecil, you are a poor man. A great trouble has for the last number of months unmanned you, and in your desperate attempts to drown that trouble you have squandered a small fortune. You go to Right Bower to-day, with five dollars of your own in your pocket."

"Whoever you are, Crazy Chet, I do not know," the horseman said; "nevertheless, as a marksman, you hit the

bull's-eye of fact with accuracy. I go to Right Bower literally strapped."

"An' I say it would be worse than madness to do that. You'll need money there, as you never needed it before. Now listen: when I shuffle off this mortal coil, I leave behind no person who has any claim upon me as a friend or relative except you."

"Except me?"

"Exactly—you. You do not know me, perhaps never heard of me; but I know you. Now having made my pile, I propose to make you my heir. Here"—and he took from his side-pocket a great leathern wallet that was fat to say the least—"is my first bequest. It is ten thousand dollars—all honestly earned by my own hands, and mine to do with as I please. I hereby give it to you as your own, on conditions. Will you take it?"

The astonishment of Cleveland St. Cecil was now genuine. It beamed from his eyes, and was expressed upon his countenance.

"Why, man, what do I want of your money? I never saw you before that I know of. You must surely be out of your head. Why should you wish to bestow your wealth on me?"

"Because you are every inch a man; because you know no fear of man or beast; because once given, your word is as a bank."

"Admitting all your laudatory reasons, there are others more in need of money than I—the poor——"

"Bah! I am no philanthropist. I'm business! I give you my money, but I first must have your promise that you will earn it."

"Explain yourself!"

"I will. You see the grave indicated on the map? Well, there's none there now, but there will be to-morrow morning. My remains will be in it, too. Satisfy yourself on that point. Do you know how you can do it?"

"By disinterring you, likely."

"Yes—or, I will make it easy. A wooden box-shaped tube will protrude from my grave—to let out the bad smell, when I decompose. Any time you want to see me, look down that tube, and if you've any talent for the doctor trade, you can pick up a heap o' ideas 'bout decomposin' stiffs. But, I'm off the p'int again. D'ye

accept o' the conditions?"

"I haven't heard of 'em, yet?"

"Oh! true enuff. Waal, when ye git to Right Bower, you'll encounter Gold Brick, the only woman I ever loved!"

"Indeed!"

"Yas—she runs the Palace, where fortunes change hands every night, on the turn of a card. She plays a squar' game, an' don't allow no other kind to be played, thar, nuther. You will find her a most dangerous woman to meet and resist. She has the fascinating power of a beautiful demon. She winds men around her finger, literally, at will. In the first place, I want your promise that you will steel yourself against the wiles of this woman."

St. Cecil laughed; it seemed so absurd.

"I can safely promise that. I am henceforth impregnable against the attacks of the fair sex," undisguised bitterness in his tone.

A faint smile hovered about Crazy Chet's lips.

"You say 'henceforth?' I know why—but, let that pass. Your past is no secret to me. You have made promise Number One. Now, for the second. This gambler queen you will find, has luck to beat the devil, and it is simply impossible to unnerve her, by loss, or to break her bank. Of all things, she seems haughtily proud of this fact. Will you believe me, when I say I saw her lose a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, on a game of draw, and then laughingly offer to double or quadruple it, on another game?"

"Seems like a pretty hard mouthful to swallow, I'll admit!" St. Cecil declared.

"Did she do it?"

"No! the feller see'd thar was no use to try to run her out, and wisely pocketed his boodle, and skipped the town."

"She must have a private mint."

"Suthin' quare about it. D'ye kno' what she did wi' me?"

"Go on!"

"She cleaned me out o' ten thousand last night. We had been sorter friends, an' I made a proposition o' marriage. She know'd my pedigree war above par, so fur as Right Bower were concerned. She finally consented to do this:—

We were to play a game o' poker. The stakes were to be my life and ten thousand dollars—my hull pile—against her hand in marriage. If I won, she was to marry me. If she won, I was to shell out my cash, an we were to meet to-night, in a certain place, an' she put a bullet through my heart."

"Well?"

Cleveland St. Cecil stroked his glossy beard, and seemed greatly interested.

"Well, that event is to come off. She won the game. At the appointed hour the great game-keeper will cash my checks, and I'll throw up my hand, fer good. I want you to promise one more thing—that you will go to Right Bower ostensibly to act as receiver for old Farmer—in reality to break Gold Brick's bank beyond retrieve—to the last copper."

"You do?"

"Yes. You'll find her a desperate sharp. Of money she apparently knows no limit—yet, I have taken my oath her bank shall be broke. She has lost me my life—I will lose her her money!"

"And you expect me to do it?"

"I do! Of all men who ever flipped a pasteboard I would choose you for the work!"

"You know I have no skill!"

"Bah! you are the devil himself at cards!"

"A flattering compliment, and I must be in league with the old boy, indeed, to hope to break a limitless bank with ten thousand dollars."

"That is but a starter!"

"Indeed! Where is the rest to come from?"

"From the tomb of Crazy Chet!"

St. Cecil started in surprise; but Crazy Chet went on:

"Whenever you want money drop a cent down the tube into my grave, and directly after you will be supplied with money, by an angel, in disguise. If one thousand is wanted, drop one cent; if ten thousand, ten cents, and so on in proportion to the amount you desire. The bank, I think, will prove limitless."

"If the bank fails?"

"Your contract is ended!"

"And what am I to receive for all this?"

"What you have ever had, until I got the drop on you,

to-day—a charmed life. Do you agree? Do you swear to do as I will in this matter?"

The newly appointed receiver of the Raymond Mining and Milling Company was silent several minutes. He was surveying the man before him, as though to read him through and through; but he could gain no satisfaction. To the best of his judgment, he had never seen the fellow before.

"It seems like making a verbal contract to serve Satan!" he said, finally.

"But it is not. You'll find every one your enemy in Right Bower—all except one—even to those who profess the greatest friendship, of course, excepting this one. Mind, I tell you that you will have to defend yourself."

"Supposing Mr. Cleveland St. Cecil finds the camp decidedly too hot for his taste?"

"Then address a note to Crazy Chet, through his individual post-office, and results will follow."

"It is fortunate I am not weak-minded, or I should collapse with nervous horror," St. Cecil laughed. "I understand, however, and will comply with your demands."

"Then you swear to serve me?"

"I do; but understand one thing—this does not interfere with my duty toward Jason Farmer, of Helena!"

"Not in the least. You will have no reason to alter your arrangements with him! I am, I may add, proud to note the fact of your intended honesty toward him; but, once more, let me say look out for yourself, for I doubt not you will have trouble with Stephen Raymond, and his nephew, Ralph Chester."

"I have my orders. I shall obey them."

"Good! Now, that all is settled, we will part. I may as well tell you that I should have killed you had you not come to my terms. My will is iron—else I shouldn't die to-night."

"You are resolved upon that?"

"Permitting her to kill me—yes. Remember my last words—but for a strange discovery, it would not be so. Here is the money! Good-by!"

And tossing St. Cecil the wallet, the eccentric being wheeled, and strode off up the canyon.

CHAPTER II.

Gold Brick.

Cleve St. Cecil watched the man until he was out of sight; then, pocketing the wallet, he spoke to his spirited steed, and galloped away toward Right Bower, the new and prosperous little mining town, four miles further down the gulch.

His mind was busied in wondering what all this afternoon's adventure would amount to; he was, though an experienced man of the world, mystified as he had seldom if ever been before; and he knew he had given his assent to a most extraordinary contract, and was in duty bound to honor it.

Who Crazy Chet was he had no power of conceiving, and it only added to his mystification, that the strange fellow should know so much about him.

Four months before that day he had saved Jason Farmer, the bonanza king, from being robbed by a gang of roughs on the outskirts of Helena, Montana; and so grateful was the millionaire, that he had at once taken St. Cecil into his employ, without even inquiring into his past history; and a week later had dispatched him to the far East on a matter of speculation in stocks.

There St. Cecil had remained and faithfully discharged his duties until about three weeks before our story opens, when he received an order, accompanied by a draft for fifteen thousand dollars, and was directed to return West at once, and take up his position in Right Bower, as receiver for the Raymond Mining and Milling Company, in which Farmer held the majority of the stock, but had never realized anything to show for it, despite the fact that the mines of the company were in a highly productive condition.

St. Cecil had closed up his eastern affairs, accordingly, and set out direct for Right Bower.

He had guessed his reception would be unfavorable even before his meeting with Crazy Chet, for the tone of his employer's letter had given him to understand his position would be a trying, perhaps hazardous one.

Thinking of these matters was he while riding toward

his destination, when he heard a voice, and saw a woman, mounted upon a white horse, riding toward him from a transverse ravine.

Seeing that she was motioning to him, he drew rein; but was on his guard, in case she might prove a decoy.

As she drew near he saw that she was young and beautiful—not over eighteen years of age, and formed in nature's happiest mold.

In face she was equally pretty. Her features were finely cut, the mouth, particularly, wearing a most winning expression; her complexion was light, and skin pure, with hair of blonde color to match; her eyes, however, were the feature that put the finish to her beauty, being of a brilliant brown.

She was attired in a cool, airy riding-habit, and her jaunty sun-hat was crowned with a wreath of wild flowers.

"Here's a rustic beauty!" St. Cecil mused, as she rode up. "Can this innocent-looking child be the desperate gambler queen whom I have to tackle?"

Without hesitation the young lady rode nearer.

"Excuse me!" she said, "but are you not Mr. St. Cecil, the company's newly-appointed receiver?"

"You have guessed correctly; I am Mr. St. Cecil. I admit that you have the best of me, however!"

"Oh! I presume so. I shouldn't have had the presumption of addressing you only that we have been expecting you; and then, too, Mr. Farmer sent a description of you. I am Ruth Raymond. My father is a stockholder in the mines."

"Ah, yes! I am pleased to form your acquaintance. I hardly expected to find Right Bower blessed with any of the fair sex."

"Didn't you?" with a laugh. "Well, I dare say you won't be terribly disappointed, for there are but two ladies in the camp. I am one; the enigma, who calls herself the Gold Brick, is another. She runs a gambling-place, however, and of course hardly deserves the name of a lady."

"Possibly not, though once in a while a woman has been driven into the profession, by desperate circumstances. Your father is expecting me?"

"Yes. He has been anxious lest some harm should befall you. Papa will be so glad to be relieved of a part of

the business, and it was so considerate of Mr. Farmer to appoint a receiver and business manager."

St. Cecil wondered if she meant it. Perhaps she didn't know of the reason why a receiver had been appointed. Perhaps she did not know that Farmer had insisted upon the appointment because Stephen Raymond was getting rich out of the mines, Ralph Chester was getting wild and dissipated—though that was not new—and he, Jason Farmer, was getting—left!

Such thoughts darted through St. Cecil's mind, but he chatted pleasantly, and they soon reached Right Bower.

It was a rough, canyon town, built of rough boards or stone and adobes, as the case might be. There was but one street, and this was a stage trail, with a row of shanties on either side of it. Saloons abounded, but the principal one was known as the Palace, being so designated by a large transparency over the door. It was only a one-story structure, but it had a wide frontage, and was a couple of hundred feet deep.

Then, there were a couple of stores and offices, a hotel, and a dance-house, not yet ready for use, and a large stone residence, of modern architecture.

Being a new camp, and in the boom of its glory, the town was literally chock-full of people, and the one main street was thronged with all varieties of humanity of the male persuasion, as St. Cecil and Miss Raymond cantered into town, and drew rein before the office of the company, which was situated opposite the Palace, where the gambler queen, Gold Brick, held forth.

A short, thick-set citizen, with a full, beardless face, stood in the door of the office, and Miss Raymond called out, as they drew rein:

"Here, papa—this is Mr. St. Cecil!"

The fat man advanced, his peering, shrewd little eyes scrutinizing the new receiver sharply.

"Mr. St. Cecil, I am right glad to meet you," he said, offering his chubby hand. "I have been anxious about you."

"So your daughter has informed me. Stage travel is slow, else I should have been here before. I got disgusted with the time I made, and so took to horse. Everything jogging along nicely, I suppose?"

"Perfectly, sir. I am glad you have come, however, as

we declare a semi-monthly dividend to-morrow, and old Farmer is such a queer old hunk, that I want his representative to see that everything is all right."

"Very well. I will assume my position to-morrow, then."

"As a matter of course. You bring money with you?"

"Yes; with instructions to turn it to the use of the firm, for the purchase of a new tract of land, providing I believe the investment will pay."

A faint sneer escaped Stephen Raymond.

"Farmer is getting mighty careful," he said. "He acts as though he was afraid to trust to my judgment, for fear I would cheat him."

"I know nothing in regard to that. I simply have my orders. Where is the land?"

"It's a tract lately owned by a man named Chet Rossitur, but yesterday sold by him to a speculator named Finch, who holds it at twenty-five thousand."

"Very well, we'll go see it to-morrow. I am rather tired, and so will ask to be excused to-day."

"Certainly. Will you leave the money in the safe here, and take tea with us?"

St. Cecil was puzzled for a moment.

His orders from his employer were to keep the money to himself until satisfied that the investment would be profitable.

"You will have to pardon me, Mr. Raymond, but my orders are to keep charge of the money at present."

"Oh! all right. It's of course immaterial to me. Ruth, I will give Mr. St. Cecil into your charge, and will join you at the house directly."

St. Cecil accordingly accompanied Miss Raymond, and they were soon joined in the really luxurious parlor by the speculator, who chatted affably.

Tea was presently announced, and when it was over Miss Raymond favored her guest with a number of piano solos, which she executed with much artistic skill.

St. Cecil then bade them good-evening, and set out about town to see the sights, and to see that oddly-named personage, the Gold Brick, in the bargain.

He was a man of striking appearance, and as it was already known that he had come to Right Bower in capacity of receiver, he became an object of attraction as

soon as he appeared on the streets.

After a stroll in the fresh air, he sauntered into the Palace, whose exterior did anything but resemble what the name represented it to be.

Inside, however, all was different, for both cleanness and taste were there displayed.

There were two apartments, the first being a bar-room, well fitted up and stocked, the glittering array of decanters, glasses, mirrors and pictures reminding St. Cecil of drinking "parlors" he had seen in the East.

A number of roughs who were drinking at the bar severely scrutinized the receiver as he entered and passed on into the next room, which was a large, brilliantly-lighted room, or saloon, with matting upon the floor and blue cloth hangings upon the wall and ceilings, while the furniture was, for that region, costly.

Card-tables, faro-tables, keno and roulette lay-outs, billiard and pool tables, and a wheel of fortune were among the "attractions" offered to tempt the unwary and the wary alike.

This saloon was well filled, and every game had its devotees, a sprinkling of those present being well-dressed and probably men of means, while the remainder were made up of miners, bullwhackers, bummers, cowboys and roughs in general.

A swift glance apprised St. Cecil that the proprietress of this temple of chance was not present, the faro game being dealt by men, all of them evident professionals.

At one of these tables sat three men, one of whom instantly attracted St. Cecil's attention. He was a veteran, evidently, for his long hair and stubby beard were white as snow, while his face, red and good-natured, was covered with the scars of much rough usage.

One noticeable peculiarity about him—he had no ears! They had been shorn off close to his head.

He was clad in buckskin, slouch hat and moccasins, and wore pistols in his belt.

Upon a chair beside him, seated in dog-fashion, was a vicious-looking billy-goat, who, to all intents, was watching the game with as much interest as the others.

The man upon the other side of this veteran was a well-formed fellow, with dark hair, eyes and mustache, and a rather disagreeable expression of countenance, even

though he could not exactly be called bad looking.

The game-keeper was a man of something the same appearance, but wore a less dissipated look.

This much St. Cecil saw, and then he approached the table, and, taking his position behind it, he watched the game.

The old scout had his money, fifty dollars, on the queen of hearts.

The cards were drawn from the box, and the game-keeper raked in the stakes.

"You're out of luck. Avalanche, as well as Chester!" the game-keeper, Lasker, said. "The house is in luck."

"Great ham-bone o' Honduras, yas," the old chap grunted. "Ye kin bet I ain't no more luck ner a frog in a snow storm. Hyer I sailed in—me an' Jeremiah—expectin' ter corral a boodle, an' then skip back to fur kentry—great ham-bone, yes! Jerry, you old buck, we're strapped—d'ye know it?"

"Ba-a-a!" bleated the goat; "ba-a-a!"

"See! he 'preciates ther sittywation," and Avalanche grinned comically.

"Make your game, gents, ef you're goin' ter play!" sung out Lasker.

"I'm broke!" declared Avalanche, attempting to rise; but St. Cecil pushed him down again.

"Sit still, old man; I'll put up the stakes. What's your limit, gents"? St. Cecil asked.

Lasker and Chester looked at the stranger in surprise.

"Guess you're new, hyerways, pard," the former observed. "Thar's no limit, hyer in the Palace. That same we air right proud to say."

"A pretty broad assertion that. Has the bank never been broken, sir?"

"Never."

"Indeed! How is the limit with you, sir?" and the receiver turned to Ralph Chester, though he knew not who he was.

"Mr. Chester is good for as much as any ordinary man generally cares to stake on one game!" Lasker announced.

"Then, how do five thousand dollars strike you, gents?"

"Agreeable so far as I am concerned!" Chester asserted plainly. "I generally like to know who is in the game though."

"Certainly. Allow me to introduce myself, sir, as in our business relations we shall probably meet often. I am Cleveland St. Cecil!"

"Very delighted to meet you," returned Chester, with evident sarcasm, both in look and tone.

He didn't offer his hand, nor look at the new receiver; so St. Cecil paid no further attention to him.

The game was played, the stakes aggregating fifteen thousand dollars.

Avalanche raked the pile!

Again the play. Again the same result.

"Double it!" Lasker gritted.

It was done.

Avalanche won!

"Bank's broke, 'til the boss comes!" Lasker growled.

"The boss is here!" a woman's voice cried.

CHAPTER III.

Big Stakes.

A woman's voice, it was—soft, sweet and melodious, yet, St. Cecil thought it meant "business."

And the owner?

She had just advanced to the table, and was taking Lasker's place as dealer.

She was young, evidently, and well formed, her figure being clad in a quiet but rich costume of combined lace, silk and satin.

Her hair was dark brown, and worn in flossy profusion over her shoulders; a becoming gold-colored turban of silk crowning her head.

It was also noticeable that all her costume was light or dark gold color, and she wore some rough diamonds.

Her hands were white and small, and the mouth and lower part of her face were decidedly pretty—for no more could be seen, the upper part being covered by a half-mask, black in color.

St. Cecil gazed at her in great surprise, for a moment;

then, seeing that she was taking the same liberty of staring at him, he averted his gaze.

"Yes, ma'am, ye can hev my place!" Lasker said, rising, and giving her the seat. "I opine ye come jest in time fer ter save the reputation of the house, too, fer my limit's my limit ye know."

"Certainly. So the gents have been trying to run the bank, eh? How much has the house lost?"

"Twenty thousand!"

St. Cecil saw a grim expression hover for an instant about the gambler queen's mouth, as she turned her piercing gaze toward him.

"That looks like an attempt to run the bank, sir," she smiled, sweetly.

"I believe your aide remarked that there was no limit, and that the bank had never been burst," St. Cecil answered, composedly.

"Lasker was right. And I may as well infer, while I am at it, I suppose, that your mission in Right Bower is to burst the bank."

"Believe that, if you like, madam. Allowing that I would like that honor, I yet have a still more important mission in the camp."

"Yes, this is the fellow old Farmer has sent on to watch Stephen Raymond and I," Ralph Chester added, with a sneer, which he made no attempt to disguise.

"You couldn't have hit it closer, since you choose to so state it," St. Cecil answered. "I am the newly-appointed receiver for the Raymond Mining and Milling Company."

"No doubt the receipts will keep you in funds to gratify your passion for the faro-table," Chester laughed, lightly; yet St. Cecil knew he meant an insult.

"I'll remind you of those words, sir, after awhile," the receiver retorted. "Will the game proceed, madam?"

"Certainly, sir. If you came to Right Bower to fight the tiger, you shall have the satisfaction of smoothing down its ruffled hair, or feeling its claws. The cards are in the box, gents; make your game, without limit."

A thousand-dollar note floated from St. Cecil's fingers, and settled down upon the queen of hearts.

"That's my opinion," he said.

Chester won.

"You're in luck, Mr. Chester," Gold Brick encouraged.

"Hardly, with even nineteen thousand out of pocket!"

"Your luck never leaves you, once you strike it."

"May I examine the box?" St. Cecil asked. "I am a stranger, and it is to my interest to see that I am fairly dealt with."

"Certainly. I use no combination affair," Gold Brick replied, coldly, as she shoved the box across the table.

A glance satisfied the receiver that all was square.

"Very good," he said, returning it. "Old gent, can you count?" and he laid a handful of money before Old Avalanche, the whole amount he had won, and what he had received from Crazy Chet, except a reserve of five hundred dollars, which he had no intention of risking to-night.

"Great ham-bone that stuck in the larynx of old Jupiter! twenty-nine thousand five hundred dollars! Lor' Jerusha! ye ain't goin' ter risk all o' that, pardner?"

"I am. I came to burst the Gold Brick's bank!" St. Cecil declared, with a faint smile.

The Gold Brick's teeth went together with a peculiar sort of click.

"You will have to go higher than that to do it. I haven't the money on hand to-night; will my check do until to-morrow morning?"

"Certainly!"

"Lasker, write a check for twenty-nine, five, payable to Mr. Cleveland St. Cecil!" the gambler queen ordered, briefly. "Mr. Chester, are you going to join us?"

"I have first to learn if my check is acceptable," Chester answered, sourly.

"That depends upon circumstances," St. Cecil returned. "You should know if your bank-account will back it."

"I will indorse his check!" Gold Brick interposed.

"Great ham-bone that discombobberated ther terrest'ial gravytation uv old Joner!" ejaculated Old Avalanche. "Thes aire ther kind o' grit what tells. 'Mind me o' ther days o' ther Black Hills, when old boy Deadwood Dick useter l'arn ther tiger how ter trim his toe nails!"

"Mention not that devil," cried the Gold Brick, sharply.

"Great ham-bone! why not? A better-hearted galoot nevyer rid a horse or swallowed cold lead!" averred the old goat-owner.

"That may be, my friend, but they say the devil's al-

ways near when he is being talked about, so don't introduce any of his lieutenants. There are already enough blacklegs in and about Right Bower."

"Mebbe thar be mum—mebbe thar be; but ye'll allurs notice they hang 'roun' the incubater ruthur nat'ral."

The Gold Brick laughed.

"You are rather truthfully facetious, old gent," she responded, showing her pearly teeth.

Then the cards were slowly and carefully drawn from the box.

A little cry of anger escaped the gambler queen, as upon the drawing of the last card, Cieve St. Cecil reached forward and raked in the stakes!

"Great ham-bone! Scoops the pot like a major, does the Big Beard!" roared Avalanche in delight. "Lor' Jerusha! Eighty-eight thousan' dollars, squar', an' five hundred fer to spare fer pin-money?"

A large crowd had collected around the table, and a strange murmur ran rampant at Avalanche's exclamation.

"The bank's broke!" some one whispered, shrilly. "The feller sed he'd do it, an' he has!"

Gold Brick had been thoughtfully shuffling the cards, her lips compressed tightly, but she looked up with a fiery glance when the words reached her hearing.

"Who was so remarkably brilliant as to make that surmise?" she demanded. "Whoever has such startling knowledge, will, no doubt, be startled to learn that my bank is not broke. Sit still, Mr. St. Cecil. You, Mr. Chester, I presume, will withdraw?"

Ralph Chester was white with rage, which he was endeavoring to hold in check.

"I am done," he answered. "This fellow's fingers will unclasp from around my money before long, or I'll lose my guess."

"If you regret your temerity in venturing into the game, I'll lend you a few thousand," St. Cecil observed.

"Thanks. I am no beggar. When you have a trifle of leisure I shall take some of the conceit out of you."

"I'll not forget. I am always happy to accommodate gentlemen."

Gold Brick had turned to Lasker.

"Lew, will you be kind enough to fetch Mr. Virden here at once?"

"If he will come, my lady."

"Tell him that it is imperative."

The gambler turned and left the Palace, but was back in five minutes accompanied by a well-dressed man.

"Mr. Virden," Gold Brick said, "yonder gentleman, Mr. Cleveland St. Cecil, holds my check for eighty-four thousand, five hundred. Will you give me a statement of my bank account up to now, considering the check?"

"Any others outstanding, ma'am?"

"None."

Virden took a note book from his pocket and made a few figures upon one leaf, which he tore out and handed the gambler queen.

Gold Brick glanced at it with an approving nod, and handed it to St. Cecil.

"You will see I have still sixty-eight thousand balance," she remarked. "That is all, to-night, but don't consider my bank broken. To-morrow, after noontide, by asking Mr. Virden you will learn that I am ready to see you again. We will play for the sixty-eight."

"One moment, please. Mr. Virden, is Mr. Chester's check good for twenty-nine thousand, five hundred?" St. Cecil asked.

The banker smiled.

"Less sixteen thousand dollars, sir," he responded.

St. Cecil gazed at Ralph Chester a moment, with a peculiar expression.

"Your nerve is unparalleled," he finally said. "However, I dare say your friend will make it all right."

And he turned inquiringly toward Gold Brick.

"As I indorsed his check, certainly!" was the haughty answer. "I believed Mr. Chester better fixed, financially. Mr. Chester, draw St. Cecil a check for thirteen thousand five hundred, and give it to him. I will then stake sixty-eight against fifty on a game of poker, which will make up the difference. Is that satisfactory, sir?"

And her address to St. Cecil was sharp, to say the least.

"It is not. I would not take advantage of you, meanly. Instead, I will stake my even eighty-eight against your fifty, you first making good Chester's deficiency."

"Very well, you are certainly not lacking in nerve, either!"

"A nerveless man would scarcely attempt to break the Gold Brick's bank!" and St. Cecil laughed lightly.

The matter was soon arranged, and Gold Brick ordered a new deck of cards, while they changed tables "for luck." Most of the other games had now ceased, and the devotees thereof were gathered around the table where sat St. Cecil and the gambler queen.

It was to be a game of interest, for if the Gold Brick lost, her bank was temporarily broken—something that had never been done before since she came to Right Bower, and opened the house to the public.

It was to be one game, and all eyes that could get a glimpse at the table watched eagerly.

St. Cecil was apparently unconcerned about which way the game resulted.

Gold Brick had been calm in all the other games, but now played a little nervously, nevertheless she won the game and raked in the stakes, 'mid a shout that caused a hundred echoes to reverberate throughout the room.

St. Cecil arose from the table, an inscrutable smile upon his face.

"I have lost, 'tis true, and I am not sorry, for I do not want to deprive you gents of a lady manager for the Palace too soon. Madam, I shall be pleased to engage at faro with you again to-morrow evening for higher stakes. Until then, au revoir!"

"Hold on, please!" Gold Brick ordered, rising and motioning to Lasker. "Mr. Lasker will let you out. The door has been locked while we were playing."

"Indeed!" and St. Cecil spoke with stinging sarcasm. "You could have saved yourself the trouble. I had no intention of escaping with your money to-night. I simply came to see if you played a square game. Faro you deal very nicely, but poker is not your forte, unless you learn to use your fingers more dextrously than the eye can detect. However, I will bid you good-evening."

"Stop! do you mean to say I cheated at the game of poker?" she demanded, deeply moved by passion.

"I do, madam. You did it very cleverly, or I should scarcely have noticed it. It don't matter, though; it was only the queen and 'ace of hearts."

An exasperated cry escaped her lips, and a shining, gold-plated revolver flashed in her hand.

"You are mad, man, to insult me, of all women. Take back those cowardly words or I'll send a bullet through your heart!"

"Through my heart?" he queried, smiling.

"Yes, through your heart! You are the first man who has ever been insulting enough to accuse me of cheating. Take back your words or I'll drive them down your throat!"

"Madam, you will excuse me but I can not oblige you. True, it would have been more gentlemanly, without doubt, had I kept mum; but I am honest!"

A little cry of fury burst from her lips, and she fired directly at his heart.

As she did so, he was seen to make a quick upward movement with his hand and the instant following the report held a small cartridge-bullet between his thumb and forefinger—such a bullet, too, as could fit the cylinder of no other weapon in the room than that held by Gold Brick, the gambler queen!

A murmur of astonishment escaped the crowd and Gold Brick reeled back with a gasp.

"Enough! Begone, devil that you are!" she faintly articulated.

"Certainly. I merely wanted to illustrate that you do not understand the first rudiments of shooting!" he answered, with a quiet laugh.

Then, turning, he sauntered out of the Palace into the street.

Ralph Chester followed.

There was a greenish, venomous glitter in his eyes and his dusky face was whiter than was its natural hue.

"See here, St. Cecil!" he cried, the receiver having failed to notice that he was followed, "a word with you, sir."

"Well, speak out!" Cleve returned, pausing and looking back. "If you want anything, name it!"

"I do want something, sir; what is more, I am going to have it. You have been exercising your lip too much to-night for a mere stranger, and in behalf of myself and Gold Brick, I demand satisfaction!"

"In other words, you want guns!"

"Yes, if you so choose to express it!"

"Correct! In what way will you have it?"

"Pistols will do, sir, at fifteen paces."

"For me they might, but not for you!" St. Cecil answered, quietly. "I do not care to take advantage of a man, no matter how great an enemy, by meeting him with firearms unless he is my equal in their use—and I acknowledge no equal in this line!"

"Indeed! Will you let bragging go until another time? Please understand that I am no baby at pistol practice."

"Maybe not; but I decline to meet you except I give you large odds!"

"Meet me you've got to! So name your odds, sir!"

St. Cecil was silent a moment, as if in thought, a sweeping glance taking in the sea of faces around him—grim, rough faces that possessed more expressions of brutal passion, than of mercy.

"Well," he said, "if you insist on endangering your life, my man, I'll tell you how I will fight. We will strike positions fifteen paces apart, and the weapons shall be pistols. I will use only my left hand, my right being tied behind my back. You shall use both hands or either one, as you like—shall have the first fire, and after that, take two shots to my one. You must kill me, or I will kill you, very likely! Do you understand, sir?"

"I am not dull, neither am I deaf," Chester answered. "Please understand another thing—but, never mind! The boys will fix you if I am hurt!"

"Oh! the boys will?" St. Cecil retorted. "If I should chance to have the misfortune to kill you—"

"We'll give you twenty-four hours to skip!" one of the ill-savored miners interrupted.

"Very well, Mr. Chester; take your place. This delay is tame."

The proper distance was measured off, and the two men took their positions.

One of the bystanders bound St. Cecil's right hand behind his back, and gave him a pistol.

Chester's arms were free; each hand contained a revolver.

"Great ham bone that dislocated the brown-kitties uv old Joner!" snorted Old Avalanche. "This aise a raile old sarcus, fer sure! Git ready, gents! When I sing out 'Keno!' let her flicker, an' go 'cordin' ter 'greement. Ralph

Chester hes ther first bang! St. Cecil hes the seckond, an' Chester the next two. Cl'ar to the sides, gents! Peel yer eye, thar, yeou Jerry mire! An', consarn ye, ef ye see aither party goin' in fer enny shenan, jest make it yer p'int ter nip it. D'ye twist?"

"Ba-a-a!" and Jeremiah gave a belligerant shake of the head.

"Now, then, gents, git ready to sail over Jordin on a blizzard. One! two—keno!"

Ping!

The pistol in Ralph Chester's right hand spoke rather spitefully.

St. Cecil laughed mockingly.

The bullet had passed wide of him and hit a stump in the street.

"Great ham-bone! ef yer can't shute any straighter ner thot, you're N. G." cried Avalanche.

"Ready! next man!"

St. Cecil raised his left hand; but before he could fire, there was the report of another weapon, and a bullet grazed his wrist, benumbing it so much, that the pistol dropped from his grasp.

"Luck fer me!" shouted Chester. "My next shot!"

And he leaped forward with upraised weapon, to get near enough to his victim to make sure of him.

But—

The villian is suddenly foiled.

Jeremiah utters an angry "ba-a-a!" and leaps through the air like a projectile hurled from a mortar.

His knotty head catches Ralph Chester in the pit of the stomach, and the villian as suddenly collapses and tumbles in a heap to the ground.

"Ba-a-a!" bleats Jerry, and giving Chester a couple of bunts that roll him over and over, the victorious goat walks back to the side of Old Avalanche, now nearly purple with laughing over his animal's performance.

"Great ham-bone that made soup fer old Jupiter!" Old Avalanche snarled. "Weren't that did up in reg'lar Queensbury style? Tork about yer Sullivans—Jerry mire aire ther champion, fer ducats. Jerry, ye plum, ye shell hev six oyster cans an' a hoop-skirt fer supper, ter night, not to mention a ream o' wrappin' paper, an' a pint o'

vinegar! Sarcus is over, fellers! Buy yer chips fer the side show, next."

The "circus" evidently was over.

Chester had been knocked completely out, and some of the miners were carrying him into the Palace.

St. Cecil had got a miner to release his right hand, and was busied bandaging up his wrist, which, although bleeding, was not seriously injured.

"Aire ye much hurt, pard?" Old Avalanche asked, approaching him. "Great ham-bone! ef it hadn't bin fer ther collegiate thortfulness uv Jerry mire, ye'd be a zephyr among ther clouds, now."

"My wrist is slightly benumbed—that's all!" St. Cecil answered. "Do you know where the shot came from, old man? I confess it was so unexpected, that I cannot tell."

"I jedge it came from over yonder," the scout answered, indicating the office of the Raymond Co. "Mebbe not, tho'."

"It was a dastardly trick to give the villian an advantage!" the receiver muttered, turning away, and striding toward the hotel. "I will see Chester, to-morrow!"

The "circus" being over, the crowd dispersed to the various resorts, the majority entering the Palace.

Old Avalanche, however, whistled to his goat, and took his way out of the camp by way of a wild gloomy gorge which formed an arm to the main canyon.

The goat dogged along at his heels, drowsily, and neither animal or master uttered a sound, until they were a mile from Right Bower, when Avalanche suddenly paused, and looked back.

Jeremiah did likewise.

Both appeared to be listening.

"We're followed, Jerry mire," the veteran remarked in a low tone. "Some 'tarnal skunk has taken a notion ter see whar I live, when I'm hum! Jest ye squat hyer, Jerry, while yer granddad meanders back to inwestergate. Ef I ketch ary galoot uv a 'spicious kerrecter, I'll fetch ye back a sculp ter chaw on."

Then, as the goat lay contentedly down, the hero of a hundred scrimmages stole back toward Right Bower, stealthily picking his way among the huge boulders that obstructed direct passage through the gorge.

His hand clutched a revolver, and he was ready for a surprise.

He had not far to go.

The footfalls grew plainer, and he presently saw the figure of a man coming toward him. This man was clad in a somber black, wore a mask, and was well armed—yet his bold advance did not seem to indicate that he meant mischief.

Old Avalanche waited until he was but a short distance away.

"Halt! who comes there?" he then sung out.

"A friend!" was the answer, "that is, if Old Avalanche challenges."

"It's me what does. Sing out who aire ye?"

"A spector form from the tomb—a phenix from an ash-heap!"

"Nonsense! Out wi' it, or I'll drap ye—Great ham-bone, yes!"

"Well, I'm Deadwood Dick!" the stranger said, at the same time advancing.

CHAPTER IV.

Dick and Avalanche.

Old Avalanche uttered an ejaculation of astonishment as the masked man approached and slipped off his mask.

There was no m'stake; it was the true and only Deadwood Dick—the handsome, invincible Ned Harris of old days in the Black Hills, and looking nearly as young as when Avalanche had first met him.

He wore a slight but well-trained mustache and imperial; his gaze was penetrating and magnetic, as of old, and he appeared to be in excellent health.

"Waal, great ham-bone that played the divil wi' old Joner's larnyx!" Old Avalanche yelled in delight, as he seized the sport's right hand, and shook it heartily. "Hope I may never ag'in absorb mountin' dew, ef this ain't a surprise! Whar'd ye drap from, boyee? Did ye float down on a corrugated zephyr, or a hail-storm o' demolishun—a reg'lar old blizzard o' extinkification?"

"Oh, no! Avalanche; I came in horse fashion. Least of all persons did I expect to find you in these parts, until I happened to see you."

"Ditto heer—great ham-bone, yas! Whar's ther posey, Dicky—ther blessed old gal, Calamity?"

A cloud seemed to overcast the ex-outlaw's handsome face.

"Dead, I could hope, Avalanche—but, alas! I know that hope is vain!"

"What? what? Them words from you, boyee? Speak up—what's ther matter, concarn ye! Hev ye hed another fallin' out?"

"Not exactly, Avalanche. We've parted and sworn enmity forever. Our mission on earth, henceforth, is to wreak vengeance on each other!"

"Nonsense, ye durned ijjut! Great anticuated ham-bone, I've a notion ter git up an' wallop ye over the ground!"

"Because you don't know the circumstances, my friend. I know you well enough to be certain that even you could attach no blame to me, did you know the circumstances."

"Mebbe, boyee—mebbe. I know ye thort the world o' C'lamity, an' I'm cussed ef it mustn't be a strong p'int as w'u'd drive ye away frum the gal."

"Well you may say so, when I tell you that she bore me a child, in which my whole father's love was vested."

"Go ahead, boyee—go ahead! I'm deeply interested, an' want ter heer about ther hull affair."

"You shall hear all, Avalanche—tho' I would never think of telling any one else. Nor is it a thing I like to think or talk of."

"You see, until the blow came, we were living happily in a secluded little home up in the Sierras, where I had a snug claim, and also a good grazing and hunting patch. Our baby boy, Dick, Junior, here found his way into the world, and there seemed to be nothing lacking to make home happy. I had a little sum salted away, and was steadily adding to it, and we didn't want for luxuries either. One day, while on my way to the Bar, I was set upon by a road-agent, and as he had the drop, I passed over my pile. I got a glimpse of his face, however, and remembered it. Not a week later, I accidentally saw him leaving my shanty, and saw Calamity kiss him before he rode away."

Deadwood Dick paused a moment, his voice betraying intense emotion, while his stern gaze rested upon the homely visage of the veteran scout.

Avalanche was grim and silent.

"You may imagine that this much could but arouse any husband's curiosity; still, believe me, that I kept my own counsel, and did not let on that I knew anything of the matter. I, however, kept a watch, and found that nearly every time I went forth to hunt that man visited my home.

"Finally, one day, Blondell, the road-agent was captured, and I rode over to the Bar, and privately identified him as the visitor to my cabin, while publicly I identified him as the man who robbed me on the trail. The same night of his capture he was released from jail, and made his escape. That same night Calamity and my boy disappeared.

"You cannot fully imagine my feelings. At first I made up my mind to let them go; then, I grew revengeful, and swore to follow them to the end of the earth but what I would at least recover my boy. I had no difficulty in striking their trail, and began to follow it. For a week I dogged them. One night I came across an infant's skeleton in the mountains, from which the flesh had been eaten by wolves. It needed only instinct to tell me it was the remains of my little boy.

"Maddened almost to insanity, I buried the bones, and fled on in pursuit. One night I stopped for rest at a deserted shanty, and during the night it was fired, and I narrowly escaped being roasted. Again, I was shot, on the Gila river, and nearly killed. At last, one day, a ranchero gave me a letter from her.

"'Fool—why follow us longer?' she wrote. 'You are but wasting your time, and endangering your life. After what has happened, I am well aware you seek our lives, and we must defend ourselves. You are not the only bloodhound on our tracks—but we defy them all, you included. Go back—or die. I cannot save you. The die is cast, and fate has sealed the future. Henceforth we must forever remain enemies—or, until death, at least. Go back, I say! Here ends the trail; here I pray you to for-

gev you ever knew Calamity Jane, for perhaps a lifetime could not prove to you that I am innocent.

“‘Calamity.’”

Here Deadwood gasped for breath, and reeled as if about to fall. But he seized hold of a boulder, and steadied himself.

“Is there need to say more? Does any sensible person need more, for proof of her deep duplicity and guilt?”

“It’s a dark outlook, boyee, an’ I dunno w’at ter say—great ham-bone, no! Ye kno’, though, that you doubted her, once before, an’ she proved herself innercent.”

“True, but the circumstances were vastly different, then. She has openly defied me, and announced her enmity. That settles it.”

“Well, let it drop, Dick—let it drop. Life arie but a cobweb, an’ the more ye chsae a spider, the wuss yer get tangled, no matter how fly ye aire.”

“Sensible I’ll admit, for an old throtter like you, Avalanche. But, unfortunately, I find the net more intricate, the less I try to approach it!”

“How do you mean? What brings you here, to Right Bower?”

“Time will show you what. Until that, it is best you remain in the dark. See here, Avalanche, who is the Gold Brick, that keeps the Palace?”

“Dunno no more about it than ye do, Dicky?”

“Are you sure?”

“Certain, boyee—great ham-bone, yas—tho’ she mought be C’lamity, fer all I knows on.”

“Bah! not she! I’ll swear to that. She is nevertheless, my enemy.”

“How d’ye know?”

“Intuition tells me.”

“See hyer—I see thru the fog, now. You aire the big-whiskered feller, w’ot called hisself Cleveland St. Cecill!”

Deadwood Dick laughed.

“Of course. I wondered you didn’t tumble to it, before!”

“Never so much as thort o’ it, boyee!”

“Well, you know it, now; so see that you keep ignorant of the fact. Here is the money I won for you, to-night.”

“Lor’ Jerusha! ye ain’t goin’ ter give that ter me?”

"Of course; take it; I don't want it, and you do. I am going back to Right Bower, now. Next time you see me, I am Mr. Cleveland St. Cecil. Do you understand?"

"Great ham-bone, yes."

"Very good. I'm off now!"

And turning, he strode rapidly off toward Right Bower.

The following morning Mr. Cleve St. Cecil was at the mining company's office bright and early, ready for business.

He looked fresh and rested, and though attired in the same suit he had worn when he arrived in Right Bower, looked scrupulously neat and dashing.

Stephen Raymond was already at the office, and they soon got to work at the accounts and gave them an examination.

Everything was apparently straight on the books, which showed the production of the mines, and the expenses, and dividends that had been declared.

St. Cecil, however, noticed that all the books were new, and did not have the appearance of having been used long; but he kept the discovery to himself.

"You see, Farmer is hot-headed and wrong in suspecting any crookedness," Raymond remarked. "We would not take a cent's advantage of him for the world. Hereafter we shall realize more, as we opened a new vein the other day."

"You are right, so far as these books tell," St. Cecil said. "You are paying your men two dollars per day more than any other mining company I know of. They must accordingly be reduced to four dollars."

"Sir, this is impossible! They will strike in an instant!"

"Let them. In ten hours I can flood the town with men who will jump at an offer of twenty-four dollars a week."

"But I insist that you do not meddle in this matter, St. Cecil. The men have been getting six, and I don't see but what they earn it. If you make yourself officious in this matter, I will guarantee that the men will turn on you."

"If you mean that as a threat, sir, I'll guarantee you that I am not one to be frightened out of a purpose. I have my orders from Mr. Farmer to reduce the wages, if they exceed four dollars per day."

"Very well. I'll give the men to understand that I am not responsible. If you wish to lose your popularity here, you cannot adopt a surer plan than by reducing the wages of the men one-third."

"I'll take all the chances. We will now get down to other business."

They figured up the accounts and sundry expenses; then, after everything was deducted, there was a balance of thirty thousand dollars in gold, ten of which went to Stephen Raymond and Ralph Chester, while St. Cecil took charge of the other twenty.

"I will ship this to Mr. Farmer to-day," he said. "When I have consigned it to the care of Wells and Fargo's agent, I will notify the men of the proposed reduction. Let me see—what time does the stage pass through Right Bower?"

"This afternoon, at three. Once more, Mr. St. Cecil, I would advise you, as a friend, not to attempt to change the present rate of wages."

"Thanks, Mr. Raymond, for your advice, but my resolve cannot be altered. Two dollars a day on seventy-five men is a trifle worth looking after in behalf of Mr. Farmer's interest, even if you despise the saving of it."

He then left the office and made his way to Wells and Fargo's office, where he made arrangements for the transportation of gold to Helena.

As soon as he was gone, Stephen Raymond stepped to a desk, and wrote the following words upon a slip of paper:

"Be ready, and make no botch of it!"

From a cage in a rear apartment he took a carrier-pigeon, fastened the slip of paper under its wing, and set it free through an open window.

Then, putting on his hat, he made his way rapidly to the mines.

In the meantime, having completed his arrangements with Wells and Fargo's agent, St. Cecil bethought himself of Crazy Chet's threatened suicide, and he resolved to visit his claim.

Cautioned by the suspicion that he was watched wherever he went, he left the camp in a course that would

take him from instead of toward the claim; but when at a safe distance from Right Bower, he reversed his route, taking good care to avoid the camp.

In due time, with the aid of the rude map, he found the miner's shanty, which stood among the foothills, a mile below the camp.

Near the shanty he saw a freshly-made grave, with a box-shaped pipe protruding from it about a foot, the pipe being about the size of a large cigar-box.

Trying the door of the dwelling, he found it was locked; so he turned toward the grave with no slight feelings of awe. The dirt was fresh, and it was evident that the grave had been filled in but a few hours.

Bending forward, St. Cecil peered down the box-tube into the tomb. The sight that met his gaze caused him to utter a cry of astonishment. At a depth of eight feet was a sort of vault some four feet wide by seven in length. It contained a rough coffin without a lid, the coffin being placed upon the ground.

Within it lay, outstretched, the body of a man. All of the face except the marblelike forehead and bearded chin was covered with white cloths; the peculiar whiteness of the forehead and folded hands, however, bespoke the fact that the man was dead, and not only his garments, but his whole appearance, convinced St. Cecil that it was Crazy Chet.

All this the receiver saw by the aid of a dim, weird light that pervaded the tomb—a spectral light, the origin of which was a mystery, as he could see no source from which it emanated.

"Great Heavens! this is incredible!" St. Cecil gasped, looking about him to assure himself that no one was in the vicinity. "Won't there be a sensation in Right Bower when this grave is discovered! There's some infernal mystery about this blamed affair that surpasses my comprehension, and I wish I were not connected with it. Still, I gave my word, and I'll stick to it, come what may. I'll unravel the mystery if it takes me a lifetime to do it. While I'm here I'll test one of the strange being's promises.

Leaving the grave, he gave the immediate neighborhood a thorough reconnoissance, until he was well satisfied that no one was in the vicinity; then he spy upon his ac-

tions. Then he returned to the grave, and selecting ten pennies from his pocket, he dropped them down the tube. Peering down, his astonishment was unbounded.

The tomb was dark as Stygia!

He could not see beyond a foot below the mouth of the orifice.

For a few moments he stood there, too much dumfounded to move; then, satisfied that it would be safer for him not to be discovered in the neighborhood, he turned to retrace his steps toward Right Bower.

As he did so his eye caught sight of a placard upon the cabin door.

Here was another mystery!

It had been posted there since he had tried the door a few minutes before.

"Well, I'll be blamed if this ain't enough to jar the nerves of an anchorite!" he muttered, grimly, his teeth going together with a click "I'm not at all superstitious, but it beats my time, I know."

With a hand resting upon the revolver in his belt, he strode toward the shanty-cabin—for it was built partly of logs and partly of boards.

The poster was ordinary newspaper, and had been lettered with a marking-brush to read as follows:

"OBITUARY!

"Sacred to the memory of Chet Rossitur, who lies planted in yonder grave. Peace be to his ashes; an' cussed be he who trespasses on this hyer claim!"

That was all.

...With a puzzled expression of countenance, St. Cecil took another good look around him, and then retraced his footsteps to Right Bower.

On entering his room at the hotel he found a neat package upon the bed. Unwrapping it, he found himself the possessor of a large sum of money in greenbacks—ten thousand dollars!

CHAPTER V.

The Bank Broke.

To say that St. Cecil was astonished, would be but a ludicrously mild way of expressing it. He was mystified more than he had been, before, in the whole course of his eventful career.

"There's something rotten about this, or I'm an idiot!" was all the conclusion he could come to, on deliberation. "If Rossitur is dead, then he left his human agents to do his work—for I'll swear there's no ghost work about this."

Resolved to maintain secrecy in regard to his compact with Crazy Chet, he therefore must needs make no inquiries toward solving what was so vexatious a mystery to him.

And as consideration of the case only served to puzzle him the more, he resolved to give as little thought to it as possible.

After seeing the consignment of gold safely off, on the afternoon stage, he returned to his room, and prepared a notice of the reduction of wages of all miners employed by the firm, from six to four dollars a day.

This he then posted up in a conspicuous place near the mouth of the mine, and once more sought the hotel, to await developments.

He felt sure there would be an uprising against him, in consequence of the reduction, but he was prepared to face the music, fearlessly.

The camp was very dull in the afternoon, and finding it thus, he took a nap, from which he did not awaken until about dusk.

After getting his supper, he sauntered forth toward Gold Brick's Palace, with the intention of again trying his luck, in accordance with his promise to Crazy Chet.

The street was filled with miners and rough-looking characters, peculiar to mining towns, and St. Cecil was conscious that more than one ugly glance was sent him, as he sauntered along; and he heard his name frequently uttered in connection with an oath.

He also heard the name, Chet Rossitur, mentioned on every hand, and he concluded that the miners grave had been discovered.

No attempt was made to attack him, however, and he reached the Palace in safety, where he found many of the crowd of the previous evening.

Gold Brick sat in her accustomed place at the table, and was playing with Ralph Chester and another man, whose appearance was that of a wealthy gentleman from the East.

He wore a full beard; and a number of diamonds were displayed about his person.

Gold Brick nodded, as she saw St. Cecil, but Ralph Chester scowled, and set his teeth hard together.

"Good-evening, Mr. St. Cecil," Gold Brick said, so pleasantly as to cause the receiver to wonder at the striking change in her demeanor. "Do you propose to buck the tiger, to-night?"

"Possibly, providing the tiger isn't afraid of my claws," St. Cecil replied.

"Oh! I guess there's no danger, in your nails. My bank is in easy circumstances, and it might as well be decided to-night, whether you are destined to break it, or not!"

"If that crowd comes into the game, I go out!" Chester growled, savagely.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" the Eastern gentleman said. "I agreed to back you, didn't I?"

"S'pose you did! I don't know you, and I opine you ain't no Vanderbilt!"

"It matters not who I am, so long as I back our staying in the game!" was the tart answer.

"I may infer that it will be harder to break the bank, to-night, than last," St. Cecil said, as he took a seat, "especially if the bank has one or more backers."

"The bank has no other backers than myself," Gold Brick replied. "I am backed by neither Mr. Chester nor the stranger, nor am I backing them. The full extent of my wealth is ready for business, and the man who wins it, breaks my bank, you bet."

"Very well. You will deal with no combination box?"

"Certainly not. Please examine it and satisfy yourself."

St. Cecil did so.

"It is all right," he said. "What shall be the game, gents?"

"I see about five thousand on the queen of hearts," the Eastern man responded.

"I'll back the king," and St. Cecil covered that card, while Chester, without a word, covered the ace of diamonds.

The cards were then placed in the box and drawn.

Gold Brick won.

Again the play.

Again she won.

A peculiarly tantalizing laugh escaped Gold Brick, as she saw St. Cecil bite his lip.

"Are you broke?" she asked.

"No, not yet."

"Nor we," the Eastern man added. "I propose we raise it five all around."

"Agreeable," Gold Brick assented. "Is it forty thousand or nothing, Mr. St. Cecil?"

The receiver hesitated a moment.

He held Farmer's ten thousand in his possession, and could therefore play; but the question that agitated his mind was: What if the graveyard banker should fail to respond to the call for funds?

But he had promised there should be no limit to the supply.

"I'll play once more," St. Cecil said.

Randall, the Easterner, forsook the queen of hearts and St. Cecil quickly covered it.

The game was made and drawn.

Gold Brick raked in the pile with a sarcastic little laugh.

"Your luck is phenomenal," St. Cecil declared. "If you will give me a few minutes respite, however, I can keep up my end of the row, I fancy."

He motioned to Old Avalanche, whom he spied in another part of the room, and the veteran approached.

"See here, old man, you're the fellow that was here last night, eh?" St. Cecil asked.

"Great ham-bone, yes!"

"Then can I get you to do me a favor?"

"Sartin, Cap—sartin. Allers ready ter 'blige a feller-human, when I kin."

St. Cecil took a memorandum-book from his pocket and

penciled a few words upon a leaf which he tore out and gave to the old scout.

"Read that and act accordingly," was his curt order.

The paper contained these words:

"Go to the grave of Crazy Chet, secretly, but in haste, and drop fifty cents down the tube that protrudes from the tomb. Then return here. Whatever comes mysteriously into your possession while en route, bring at once to me, without a word to anybody."

Avalanche nodded after perusing the message, and left the saloon.

St. Cecil then turned to Gold Brick.

"I retire from the game until that old gent returns," he remarked, bowing, and leaving the table.

He procured a cigar at the bar and then sauntered about, watching the other games.

In passing the faro table where Gold Brick, Randall and Chester were still playing, he made a discovery.

The beard worn by Randall was false, although it was such a clever affair, like St. Cecil's own, that very few would have noticed it.

Indeed, if they had, they would not have given the fact a second thought, for in Right Bower, and nearly all mining-camps, numerous questionable characters adopt this way of disguising their identity, and few if any feel sufficiently concerned about the matter to inquire into the why or wherefore of their use.

St. Cecil, however, had no sooner noticed the fact that Randall wore a wig, than he formed an opinion which he decided to put to the test during the evening.

Avalanche made his appearance in less than an hour, and handed St. Cecil a package, with no explanation but a puzzled glance.

The receiver then took his place at the faro table.

"I'm ready for biz now," he announced. "Is there still no limit to this game?"

"None," Gold Brick replied.

"I can see fifty thousand—that's all," Randall said. "I've not won a pot since I began. I will put up twenty-five for myself, and the same for Chester."

"You seem to take really a fatherly interest in Mr. Chester, friend Raymond," suggested St. Cecil.

The Easterner gave a perceptible start, and so did Chester, at which St. Cecil laughed quietly.

"Surprised that I penetrated your disguise, eh? Why, I should know you among a thousand, Raymond."

"You know too much. Go on with the game," was the only rejoinder.

The game was made, and the cards drawn.

"I believe I will take the pot this time, for a change," St. Cecil observed. "Are you done, gents?"

"We are," the disguised Stephen Raymond answered, as he and Ralph Chester arose.

"Then, Mr. St. Cecil, we will resort to poker for the finish," Gold Brick said, as the two men left the room.

"We may as well know who is victor to-night as any other time."

"Certainly," St. Cecil assented.

They then changed positions to a card-table in a further corner of the room, where a large crowd of by-standers followed them, anxious to witness the games that should decide who should end the victor.

"Madam!" St. Cecil said, laying a cocked revolver in front of him on the table, "if I detect any trickery in the game, I shall salivate you. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir. I shall play a square game. I propose to play you for a hundred thousand dollars!

"As you like. If you lose—"

"If I lose, one more game will decide the matter."

The cards were dealt, and the game began.

The crowd watched with breathless interest.

St. Cecil was calm and confident.

Gold Brick exhibited some nervousness, and her eyes gleamed fiery and watchful through her mask.

The game resulted in favor of St. Cecil, and he raked in the stake.

She made no show of anger, further than to ask, grimly:

"How much money have you?"

"Two twenty-five!" he answered.

She counted what money she had in the drawer, which she had brought from the faro-table.

"I can make but two hundred and ten thousand," she said. "I will stake that and the Palace against your pile."

"On one condition I accept."

"Name it."

"That you will remove that mask as soon as the game ends."

"To which I agree on conditions."

"Well, I am listening."

"The conditions are that if I lose, you will fight a man whom I shall pit against you, in a duel, the nature of which shall be left to my choice, so long as it is fair to both."

"I agree to that."

"Then the agreement is mutually signed."

The money was staked.

The cards were dealt.

The game began.

The greatest silence prevailed around the table.

With bated breath the spectators craned their necks forward, and watched and waited.

"Great ham-bone that discombobberated the larnyx of old Joner!" Old Avalanche ejaculated. "Whoever scoops the boodle kin retire from active bizness fer life. Hail-starms an' tornadoes!"

St. Cecil had won, and raked in the combined stakes—nearly half a million dollars.

A wild murmur of surprise ran through the crowd.

Gold Brick arose, and staggered from the table like a drunken person.

St. Cecil's revolver covered her before she had gone five steps.

"Halt, or I fire!" he cried, sternly.

She faced about, uttering a faint, exasperated cry.

"What do you want?" she articulated, fiercely. "Is not everything yours—what more do you want?"

"A view of your face unmasked!" he answered deliberately.

"Do you insist upon it?" she demanded.

"I do not insist upon it just at present, and here," he responded.

"Then I will see you to-morrow, and show you the man you are to fight?"

Then she turned and swept from the room, with the stately bearing of a queen, leaving the place by a rear door.

Even as she did so, a number of men entered the gaming-room, and distributed themselves about different parts of it, while three of the number approached St. Cecil.

One was a burly-looking ruffian; the other two were Stephen Raymond, and Miles, the agent of Wells and Fargo.

St. Cecil did not notice them until they were close upon him; but his hand dropped quickly to his revolver, when he noted that they held their weapons in grasp.

"Halt! gents! Don't come any further, please!" the receiver warned. "If you have got anything to say to me, I can hear at a good distance."

"We hev just suthin' to say ter ye!" the burly individual returned. "Yer Cleveland St. Cecil, ain't ye!"

"I reckon I am, providing I've not forgotten myself within the last hour!"

"Wull, I'm ther deputy-sheriff hyeraways, an' my name is Ike James."

"Happy to meet you, Ikey. What can I do for you?"

"Ye kin do me a favor o' takin' yer fin' off'n that revolver, an' throwin' up your hands!"

"Indeed! What for?"

"'Ca'se I'm hyer fer the sole express purpose of arrestin' ye, an' ye might as well cum to Limerick, fust as last. The hull town's ag'in' ye, an' tain't no use fer ye to kick ag'in' sich odds."

"What do you propose to arrest me for, Mr. James?"

The sport spoke with the utmost coolness; but no one could doubt but that he was nerved for instant action.

"You see, St. Cecil, there's a couple of hard charges against you, which makes it imperative that you be brought to justice!" the express-agent, Mike Miles, interposed. "You are charged with the murder and robbery of Chet Rossitur; you are also at the head of a gang of road-agents, that this afternoon at dusk, halted and robbed the Helena stage. More, you are the notorious outlaw, Deadwood Dick!"

"Tis false! I am no outlaw. I am in no way concerned in the death of Chet Rossitur, nor did I rob him. As to the stage-robbery, it is news to me, and I know nothing about the perpetrators of it!"

"Too thin, Harris. Evidence is dead against you, and you might as well cave without parley. Ralph Chester saw Rossitur's pocket-book in your possession last night, and you've been gambling his money way in the Palace. More than that, there is no use of your denying the road-

agent business, for one of the fellows who attacked the stage was wounded, and captured, an' on being promised his freedom, he made a clean breast of it, charging you with being at the head of the hull business!"

Deadwood Dick, as we shall hereafter know him, at once perceived that he was entangled in a net, that had been cleverly woven around him, and his face grew stern and hard as he seized his revolvers, and placed his back against the wall.

"Gentlemen, this is a plot to undermine me, and get me out of the way of yonder thieving rascal, Stephen Raymond. I refuse to surrender, and will defend myself regardless of what follows. Attack me, and I'll deal you a full hand, you bet!"

CHAPTER VI.

A Lynching Stopped.

With an eventful past record to back him, none but a stranger could have doubted the truth expressed by the words of Deadwood Dick, as he stood there at bay, but apparently as defiant and fearless as though no danger at all menaced him.

In Right Bower, however, his name and fame were not unknown, and the three men who confronted him were well aware that he would fight like a tiger before he would surrender.

"I hope you don't infer that I have any interest in causing your arrest," Stephen Raymond spoke up. "Indeed, I was struck dumb with astonishment when Mr. Miles, a moment ago, related to me the charges against you."

"Of course you wouldn't harm a hair of my head—oh! no; certainly not!" Dick said, with grim sarcasm. "You were so well pleased with my coming to Right Bower, that you were ready to fall down and worship me, despite the fact that I was in a fair way to upset your thieving operations. You are an angel, Stephen Raymond, and so is your nephew, Ralph Chester."

"You wrong Messrs. Raymond and Chester," Miles declared. "They are both honorable citizens, and it is use-

less for you to say anything derogatory to their character. What we want you to do, is to surrender like a gentleman-criminal, stand your trial and——”

“And assume my hempen neck-tie like a little man!” Deadwood Dick added, with a quiet laugh. “That would be a regular old pudding, for you gents of Right Bower, wouldn’t it? But, you see I am not playing up gentlemen, just now, but am fight to the very muzzle! You have worked a couple of outrageous charges off upon my shoulders, knowing that being first-water scoundrels yourselves, I was a man dangerously inconvenient to be lying around loose, and foreseeing that I could easiest be disposed of by making me out a murderer and a robber. I admit you have schemed very cleverly, but your climax yet lacks the capping, to make it a success. You have first to secure me, before you visit punishment upon me! As I remarked before, I propose to look out lively for my own interests, and shall help the undertaker’s trade all I can, before I knuckle under. So go ahead, and take your change!”

“You refuse ter surrender, then?” Ike James demanded.

“You bet!” was the answer.

The deputy turned to Miles and Stephen Raymond.

“Ye heer him, gents. He sez he won’t surrender. Shall I order the boyces ter riddle him?”

“No! he must be taken alive!” the express-agent declared. “I believe there is a standin’ offer o’ a big reward fer his capture, in this territory, and besides that, Wells Fargo will pay something handsome fer him on their own hook.”

“Then we as participates in the capture will git a bite at the reward, hey?”

“Of course!”

James turned and signaled to his men, and they drew near.

“Boyces, I’ll make ye ’quaint wi’ the notorious outlaw an’ pocketbook-lifter, Deadwood Dick!” the deputy said. “He’s ther galoot w’at old Farmer sends heer to cut down yer wages, an’ run the camp in ginerall!”

The dark, ugly-expressed faces of the score of miners, and their growls of disapproval was the answer.

“Ye parseeve,” James went on, “that the feller don’t intend to gi’n up, wi’out a struggle, an’ we waster to take

him alive, so as to collar ther reward. So 'cordintly, when I yell 'go fer him,' ye'r' to sail in and capture him."

"Remember, I have twelve shots in my grasp, and shall drop that many of you, at the first hostile movement!" Deadwood Dick supplemented. "So if you have any worldly effects to leave behind, you will do well to appoint an administrator of your affairs before the entertainment begins!"

The miners looked from one to the other. The man's cool demeanor, coupled with his daredevil repute of the past, did not exactly inspire them with an over-abundance of courage, nor a yearning to compete for the honor of having him prepare them for a pine box.

The trio, Raymond, Miles and James, noted this fact, with scowls of displeasure.

"Go ahead, you fools!" the mine-owner roared. "You twenty able-bodied men surely, are not afraid of yonder single scoundrel. Go ahead! I'll give you five hundred dollars out of my own pocket, if you take him alive!"

Still the men hesitated.

Death for at least several of their number stared them in the face, should they attack the sport, and well they knew it, and as each man placed a higher rate of value, than the offered regard upon his life, they yet lacked the courage to "sail in."

Matters stood at this stage, when a cool voice cried out:

"There's no use of setting those fellows on him, gents—I have a bead drawn on his heart; so step forward and secure him!"

It was even so!

Gold Brick, the gambler queen, stood in the rear doorway of the Palace, and her eye gleamed along a rifle-barrel, the aim of which covered Deadwood Dick's heart. Dick saw her as soon as the others did, and a low, bitter laugh escaped him.

"You are right, gentlemen. Where your combined force of human bull-pups couldn't have taken me, I surrender to the charms of the fascinating mother of sin, woman!" he said, restoring his weapons to his belt. "Come and take me, before I change my mind."

James advanced triumphantly, and put a pair of handcuffs upon the sport's wrists, his grotesque visage distorted by a grin.

"Gol-darn me, ef ye ain't the narve!" he said. "Pity sich a chap as you couldn't 'a b'n put ter better use. Reckon it's all up with ye now, tho'!"

Dick made no reply.

The room was filling with the curious crowd from outside, who had learned of his arrest.

Raymond and Miles had stepped to one side, and were conversing.

"What shall we do with him?" the express-agent said.

"He's a scaly customer, and if he ever once breaks loose, we might as well order our coffins, immediately."

"He must not escape!" Raymond decided, in a low tone.

"I'd rather give ten thousand dollars first. He must be surely and quietly disposed of."

"What! you don't mean to hold him for reward, then?"

"Curses on him, no! a thousand times, no! Do you know that it is vitally to your interest and mine, to see that he is out of the way? He has a powerful friend in old Farmer, and Farmer has a powerful influence with the territorial government. This Deadwood Dick believes you and I to be concerned in the stage robbery!"

Miles started. Such a suspicion he would never care to have reach his employers.

"You see," Raymond went on, "we've got to see that the fellow is quieted ourselves."

"Why not try him, and lynch him? The circumstantial evidence is sufficient."

"It is too dangerous. The fellow's been brought up for trial a number of times, and escaped in one way or another. He may have a plenty of friends lurking about, and I'd not be surprised if Farmer is in the camp this moment. No! there is but one course for us to pursue. We will set his trial for to-morrow, and lock him up under James' care. If he is found dead in the morning, what is more natural than that he committed suicide? Understand?"

"Yes. But where shall he be caged? There's not an empty shanty in the camp."

"True— Ah! but there is, though. There's Crazy Chet's place. A better one couldn't be selected."

"By Jove! you're right. We'd better get him there, too. I want to see him caged. I've too soft a snap with Wells and Fargo, to court exposure."

They advanced toward Deadwood Dick then, and Stephen Raymond addressed him:

"Deadwood Dick, I have been consulting with Mr. Miles, and have decided to imprison you, until to-morrow, in the shanty of the man you robbed and murdered. At sunrise your trial will begin, and you will be hung as soon as convicted."

"You are sure?" Dick queried.

"Certainly! We shall take good care you do not escape."

"And so you had better, for if I do escape I'll make things warm for you!"

"Come along and shut up!" Deputy James cried, seizing him by the arm, and holding a pistol ready for instant use. "You're too much of a crook!"

Followed by near the entire population of the town, Deadwood Dick was led to the isolated cabin of the dead miner, Crazy Chet.

Here the door was forced open, the prisoner shoved inside, and the door closed, when he heard Stephen Raymond giving orders to guard the shanty well, and concluded that a strong guard had been left behind, for he heard the main crowd set off for Right Bower.

He was unmistakably a prisoner, and charged with a serious crime; but the moment he learned his place of confinement, he felt easier in regard to the future. He was in the house of the very man he had promised to serve.

And he had served him.

He had fulfilled his promise by breaking the faro bank at Gold Brick's palace! Were, therefore, his labors for the crazy miner at an end? Would Rossitur give him aid, as he had promised?

These questions were foremost in his thoughts as he threw himself upon a cot in one corner and reviewed his situation.

A hundred times at least in his eventful career had death stared him in the face, and threatened to secure him as a victim, and yet he lived to recall it all.

But nothing now seemed more probable than that he was doomed if he could not make his escape, for there were two, at least, who would exert their fullest powers to crush him out of existence—Stephen Raymond, and Ralph Chester.

Then, was he expected to look for the friendship of any

of the citizens, whose influence was plainly turned against him because of his reduction of the wages of the miners?

Truly, it did not look so!

On the other hand, with no apparent chance of escape confronting him, he had no other conviction than that he was in a bad fix.

The hours dragged by slowly. Outside he could hear the sentries pacing to and fro. These were the only distinguishable sounds.

As the night advanced a thunder-storm came up and raged furiously for half an hour. The thunder pounded along the heavens threatening, as the lightning played about the lone cabin with blinding glares.

Deadwood Dick was by no means cowardly or superstitious, but he could not but feel a little awed at the situation, and he kept his eyes roving about him, wondering if Crazy Chet would make any manifestations of his presence near his former home.

The storm finally passed, and dead quiet, reigned once more. Not even the sentry tramp could be heard outside. A weary sense of loneliness and exhaustion stole over the prisoner, and ere he knew it he was off in a doze.

It was not in accordance with his habit, however, to nap long, except in safe quarters, and he soon sat bolt upright on the cot, wide awake and alert.

Some instinctive warning of danger must have aroused him.

He listened. His quick ear caught the sound of approaching footsteps.

"Some one is coming this way, and if I am not greatly mistaken, it is Stephen Raymond," he mused. "Do they mean to kill me outright, and thus make sure of me?"

He had not long to wait. The night-visitors soon reached the door, unlocked and opened it, and entered, one of the number turning on the light of a bull's-eye lantern.

There were four of the party, and they were Raymond, Chester, Miles, the express-agent, and a ruffian of the camp called Hogshead Hank.

All were well armed, and looked forbidding enough for any midnight crime.

As soon as they entered, all but Hogshead Hank approached Deadwood Dick; he staying by the door to guard against a surprise.

"Well, my gay Richard, how like you the position you occupy?" the elder mine-owner demanded, tauntingly. "One would think you were quite at home here, you take it so mildly."

"Would they? Glad you told me of it. Why are you here?"

"For a necessary purpose. We have come to make a final disposal of you, as, on mature deliberation, we have concluded that it will not be advisable to give you any show for your money!" Ralph Chester spoke out. "By the way, allow me to relieve you of the fat boodle you scooped in at Gold Brick's. It will help along my financial matters greatly."

"You've got ter divvy or I'll blow the horn," Hogshead Hank interrupted, eagerly pushing forward. "Eh? It's divvy, ain't it, Miles?"

"You bet!" the express-agent chimed in, eagerly. "Thar ain't goin' to be nothin' one-sided about ther matter."

"Who said there was?" Chester cried angrily, as he went through Deadwood Dick's pockets. "Curse the luck! he hain't got a cent of money about him!"

A cry of surprise escaped the others.

Dick's face also denoted surprise.

"See heer, durn ye, you're too funny, Mr. Road-Agent!" Hogshead Hank roared. "Jest ye sing out where ther swag is!"

"If it isn't in my outside coat-pocket, I know nothing about it!" Dick answered, "for there's where I put it a few minutes before my capture."

"Thar's not a vestige of money about you," Chester cried. "You've hid it somewheres, you devil."

"Impossible, when my hands are helpless.. I have been robbed, and I presume some one of you know by whom."

"You lie!" Stephen Raymond cried. None of us knows a thing about it. But come, boys, we've no time to waste here. You are sure the money is nowhere about his person, Ralph?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, gag him and fetch him along. The sooner we git rid of him, the better we shall be off."

Chester and Hogshead Hank performed the operation, and then dragged Deadwood Dick from the prison-room.

A suitable tree for lynching purposes grew near at

hand and here the party halted and a noosed lariat was thrown over a strong limb.

Dick was then placed upon his feet, and the noose arranged about his throat.

"There!" Stephen Raymond answered, after inspecting matters. "I allow that will fix you off nicely, Mr. Bogus St. Cecil. Are you aware that these are your last moments in this world?"

"No; I can't say as I am," Dick replied, in his old-time half-insolent way.

"Well, know it now, sir. You came here on a fool's errand, if you came to serve old Farmer, for I was prepared for you. But you did not come here for that alone—ha! ha! no!"

"You are mistaken, sir."

"Not a bit of it. You came here, still on your fierce search for your truant wife, the fair Calamity!"

"Curse you! What know you of her?"

"Everything—one thing especially, and that is that she is irretrievably lost to you, by being in my power—ay, so deeply in my power that she cannot hope to get out. Chester is her rascally brother. It was to save him from the gallows that she deserted her home and fled here, there and everywhere!"

Dick shot a stern glance at Chester.

He now began to notice a resemblance between him and the other fellow, Blondel. A rascally brother of Calamity Jane, eh? Then she was, in one sense, not so utterly false as he had at first believed! But that this swarthy man could be her brother, did not appear reasonable to him.

"They came to me!" Raymond went on, "and, being a distant relative to them both, I took compassion on them, and took Chester into business with me, and—"

"Established her in the gambling hell!" Dick cried, bitterly. "You need relate no more to me. I understand all I care to."

"Indeed! But, I must tell you that I have been backing the bank, and as she has allowed it to become broke, she has but the choice of two alternatives—one is, to marry me—the other is to quit the camp, or be forced to leave it!"

"But, why this explanation to me?" Deadwood Dick

demanded angrily. "It concerns me not what becomes of her. Proceed with your picnic."

"Get ready, boys!" Raymond commanded. "There's no use fooling with the cuss."

The three men seized the rope with a will.

"Yas, git ready, gents, but by ther great mortal ham-bone, don't yer pull on thet rope, ef yer don't want'er git struck by a hailstorm o' destruction!" a stern voice cried, close at hand.

CHAPTER VII.

The Doctor.

The surprise of the private lynchers was great, as they suddenly beheld Old Avalanche and his goat standing near, the former holding a pair of huge revolvers in his grasp, one of which was leveled upon Stephen Raymond, and the other covering the three men who held the rope.

The dim moonlight stealing downward through the patchwork of clouds, made the scene if anything more dramatic.

"Hello! who are you, and what do you want?" Raymond demanded, in a rage.

"Wail, 'cordin' ter Hoyle, I'm Old Avalanche, ther great demolisher and extarminator. I'm a sp'iler o' picnics an' leetle private snaps, like this. Goin' ter hev a darned nice time, weren't ye?"

"You'd better skip, or you'll find out. You've no right to interfere in this matter, and we'll tolerate no meddling."

"Won't ye? Waal, neow by ther muscles o' ther great ham-bone w'ot kerflummixed old Joner, I kinder argy diffrent, me man! I've two uv as purty draps as mortal man evyer held; an' 'sides, hyer's my beautiful William Goat, Jerryemiaher, as hev a batterin'-ram capacity o' sixty tons. Jerry feels in good trim, now, 'ca'se he jest chawed up an old set o' harness, a pair o' boots an' a copper wash b'iler!"

"You infernal old galoot! You don't mean to say you'll shoot?"

"Shoot? Lor' yes! Ef ye attempt ter tighten thet noose about Dicky's neck, somebody in sev'ral instances is gwine ter drap. I ain't foolin'—I mean biz!"

"What do you say, boys! Let's pitch into the old rascal and lick the blazes out of him," the express-agent suggested impatiently.

Chester and Hogshead Hank shook their heads. They knew that the veteran had the reputation of being invincible in a fight, and that having the drop as he did, it stood to reason that he would give them a chance to join the army of the departed.

"Lookee here! that's all nonsense!" Chester growled. "I fer one would like to know what's to be done? Are we to hang this ruffian or not?"

"Emphatically not!" Avalanche answered promptly. "Ye're jest gwine ter turn yer toes toward Right Bower, and mawg! D'ye hear? I mean it. Ef ye refuse one minnit, down goes the apple-cart of him w'ot hesitates. One, two, three—git!"

Stern and authoritative were the Great Annihilator's words, and not a man of the would-be lynchers' quartette doubted that he would do as he had promised.

"Boys, we've got no choice but to obey," Stephen Raymond cried, "and I am going. It will be an unhealthy thing to remain here."

"I'll fix you if you ever show up in the camp, old man; and you, too, Deadwood Dick!" Ralph Chester threatened, savagely.

"All right! I shall make it my business to hunt you up, you scoundrel, since I've found out who you are said to be!" Dick retorted.

Then the baffled party set out in single file toward Right Bower.

When he was no longer able to hear their footsteps, and was satisfied that they were really gone, Avalanche approached Dick and took the rope from his neck.

"A narrer escape, boyee—a narrer escape. Didn't much allow I'd skeer 'em away so easy. Hello! what's this?—handcuffs, eh?"

"Yes. I reckon I'll find it difficult to get them off," Dick replied.

"Dunno. That reminds me. When I was comin' heer, fust I know'd I found a key in my hand. How the 'tarnal

thing came thar is a consarned mystery. Some one must 'a' slipped it thar, but I couldn't see a person around. Jes' ther same way I cum inter possession o' that package o' money fer ye, arter I'd drapped money down yander tube. Lordy! w'ot's ther mystery about this bizness, Dick?"

"You know nearly as much about it as I, Alva. But try that key. Maybe it will fit the handcuffs."

The trial was accordingly made, and, to the great surprise of both, it did open the handcuffs, and Deadwood Dick was free!

"Another piece of Crazy Chet's mysterious work," he muttered to himself. "He or his agents it must have been who took the fortune from my pocket. If so, it was a lucky thing, for otherwise it would have fallen into the clutches of Raymond and his gang."

He turned to Avalanche abruptly.

"Where were you going?"

"To Right Bower."

"It won't be healthy for you to go there now?"

"'Spect not, till the wind blows over. I've a snug home up in the mountains, tho', where I'm comfortable, an' ye're welcome as the day is long."

"Thanks. But I shall sojourn in Right Bower yet awhile—in disguise. You have my heartfelt gratitude for rescuing me, as you have done, not to-night alone, but frequently before. I will see you again; so good-night!"

"Stop!" cried a ringing voice, and simultaneously with a sudden outburst of radiant moonlight, the Gold Brick was seen standing a few paces away, a gleaming revolver in her grasp.

"Stop!" she repeated. "Before you go, Old Avalanche, I want to settle with this man, Deadwood Dick!"

As she ceased speaking, she took her mask off and put it in her pocket, revealing her wildly handsome face and flashing dark orbs.

Deadwood Dick's face was calm, stern, and otherwise expressionless. He showed no surprise at the transformation, nor did he offer to open the conversation.

"Deadwood Dick, I have come to settle with you!" she said, facing him. "You have come here when I bade you not follow me. You have come here and accomplished one part of your vengeful mission.; I'll help along your chance to do the other part. We must fight. Before God we

are both sinful enough, but in your eyes I am the worst. We cannot live together; an impassable barrier separates us. Your aim is to crush that barrier, but you will have to crush me first. It shall be pistols, thirty paces. There need be no trifling, as we both can shoot!"

"I will not fight you, madam. My only aim is to kill the man who took you from my home!" Dick replied, coolly.

"You shall meet me. You shall fight!" she cried, excitedly. "As enemies, you and I cannot both live upon this earth. One of us must make room for the other!"

"I repeat, I will not!" Dick replied. "Go your way and rejoice.."

"Rejoice!" She spoke the word with intense bitterness, which told that her present life was far more miserable than it was happy.

Dick smiled faintly as he saw her bitterness, but said nothing.

"Rejoice!" she repeated, after a moment.

"Yes, I will rejoice, after a while. You won't fight me?"

"No."

"You are a coward. You dare not!"

Dick's derisive smile was the answer, and it seemed to madden her, for she uttered a fierce cry, and raising her revolver fired at him.

Turning she fled from the spot, never once looking back, to learn the result of her shot.

Dick staggered a little, and then straightened up.

"Avalanche," he said, soberly, "do you not believe she's crazy?"

"Great ham-bone, boyee, et do look powerfully that way."

"If not crazy, what power is it that accursed Chester holds over her, as well as Stephen Raymond?"

"Wull, Dick, I did promise her, arter she told me onc't lately, not to say nothin', but seein' it's you I'll tell ye. 'Pears thet Chester is really her brother, an' guilty o' half a dozen murders, wi' as many bloodhounds of the law arter him. It were to git him to a place o' safety that she 'bandoned you, swearing to cling to him, until satisfied the law had lost track of him, and he war outer danger. The cuss show'd his gratitude ter her by stealin' ther boy, an' sellin' it to Stephen Raymond, an' thet's how he's hed the grip on her and made her his tool!"

"Aha! then my boy still lives?"

"It do, but whar I don't know."

"We must find out, Avalanche, and get possession of him, before she does. She shall never have him!" the sport said, fiercely. "But come. We must away from this spot, lest we be discovered. I will see you again, when I want you."

"All right. Not hurt; aire you?"

"Oh! no. Merely a scratch."

The old scout was soon out of sight.

Deadwood Dick still stood near the shanty-cabin that had served temporarily as his prison, seeming deeply absorbed in a reverie, then he aroused, and approached the grave, and peered down the tomb.

All was dark, and a none too pleasant smell came from below.

"I opine some one is dead down thar, be it Crazy Chet or no," he mused. "As I don't happen to have a cent left, to invest in this graveyard lottery, I allow I'll go into the hills, and strike a camp."

He acted accordingly, soon selecting a suitable place in a sequestered glen, about three miles from Right Bower. Here, he built a small fire to keep the wolves away, and stretched himself out for a nap, for on the morrow he intended to revisit the mining town.

We will pass over the next two weeks, in the time of our story, as being particularly uneventful.

Nothing of the gay and festive Richard had been seen or heard, although a notice had been posted in different places, at the instance of Stephen Raymond, offering a reward of five hundred dollars for Deadwood Dick, dead or alive.

Some said this had scared the ex-road-agent away, but others argued that, ten to one, he was not very far off.

The excitement was daily increasing in the camp, for fresh and paying leads were being discovered, and the Raymond mine was opening up wonderfully, giving employment to many extra men.

The Palace was largely patronized, night and day, Gold Brick having resumed charge, and was evidently trying to redeem her former losses.

A big shanty-hotel had been run up, alongside the

Palace, and Right Bower had the prospect of becoming a big city, on the quick.

But one doctor did the camp afford, having hung out his shingle at the Palmer House, the new hostelry which adjoined the Palace.

"Dr. Felix Dorking" was the inscription on his sign-board, and when his business became known the doctor was an object of much curiosity and attention.

To all appearances, he was an Easterner; a broad, portly man, who dressed well, but wore his pants studied in his boots, and wore revolvers in his belt, all of which strengthened the good opinion of the "citizens" of him.

His beard was snowy white, as was his flowing hair, and little of his face was visible save his nose, sharp eyes, and a fine forehead.

Business had been dull, since the doctor's arrival, there having been no shooting-matches nor stabbing-affrays; consequently he was surprised, when he received a call to visit Stephen Raymond.

He found the mine-owner in the cosy parlor of his residence, attended by Ruth, lying bolstered up on the sofa.

"Good-morning, doctor. I heard that you had set up in business here, and so got sick, to give you a job."

"Indeed! What appears to be the nature of your ailment, sir?"

"I do not know. Strange feelings attack me, occasionally, which it would be hard for me to explain. Once I was bitten by a dog, that soon went mad, and I have had fears of hydrophobia."

"That is bad. Why have you this young lady attending you, when you might at any moment go mad, and harm her?"

"I had not thought of that. Ruth, you had better leave me. There's no telling what may happen. Do you think anything can be done for me, doctor?"

"Nothing," Dorking replied. "If you have indeed been bitten by a really mad dog, the chances are against you. If you've any conscience to clear up, why you'd better do it, and keep as quiet as you can. That's the best and only medicine."

"Thank you. If you do not think I am curable, why of course it will not be necessary to run up a bill."

"Oh! of course not," and Dorking took his departure,

after which Stephen Raymond burst into a long, loud laugh.

"Mad-dogs be hanged! I fooled him just as easily as I expected. He's no physician, and I'll swear to it. He is one of two persons, either of whom is dangerous to my interests. I will see if he cannot be unmasked. I've a deal of business to arrange, by the way!"

He touched a bell, and a Chinaman answered the summons.

"Send Chester!" he said, briefly.

The gambler made his appearance soon, looking in an ugly mood, his eyes bloodshot and his whole aspect bespeaking the effects of dissipation, and late hours.

"What d'ye want?" he demanded, sullenly, sinking into a chair. "You called me away from a fat poker hand."

"Let gambling alone. There's something more important."

"What?"

"This. I'm sick and tired of this backing you and the girl. You'd ruin me in time, and I've made up my mind to shut down, now!"

"How in thunder am I to do, then?"

"Let her take you and pilot you on. She can do that, or marry me, as she chooses. I've an idea it won't be healthy for you in this climate long, anyhow."

"Pshaw! You mean in regard to the bloodhounds of the law. They've lost the trail long ago."

"I doubt it."

"But, Calamity has gone back on me, on account of the kid. Why don't ye give it up to her?"

"Ha! ha! not yet. That's where I've got the grip on her. She must come to my terms, before she can have the child."

"Ye don't know her. She's just like me—greased lightning, when set a-going."

"Bah! You're more bark than bite, Chester. Off with you, now! Remember, I supply no more funds to either of you."

"Don't you?"

A significant voice propounded the question—the voice of Gold Brick, as we shall continue to call Calamity Jane, she having stolen into the room, unobserved.

"You don't propose to supply me or my brother with funds any longer?"

"I do not!" Raymond replied. "I'm too much money out already. You forget, mayhap what you now owe me."

"I forget nothing, sir. I propose to pay you back, dollar for dollar, what I owe you. Give me a receipt in full, sir."

Raymond looked astonished and flustered.

"What! not now—you are not going to pay all now? I am in no hurry for my money!"

Oh, no! I am aware you are not. You want to hold me in your power by keeping me in your debt. I say no, to that. I'll pay you all—a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Give me a receipt."

With ill-concealed satisfaction Stephen Raymond obeyed, and a large roll of bank-bills and the receipt changed hands.

Gold Brick waited until the mine-owner had counted the money and shoved it into his pocket, then she said sternly:

"Is it correct?"

"Yes, I beleve so. We're square."

"Not quite, if you please. There's one more little item of interest. I want my child!"

"You'll have a good time wanting I am thinking, my beauty!" was the mocking answer. "You know on what conditions I will restore the boy to you!"

"Monster! do you dare to think even for a moment that I would yield to those terms? I'd die first! I hate and abhor you, even though you are my relative. I demand my boy. If you do not give him up to me, I will appeal to the people!"

"Ha! ha! How do you suppose you could gain anything by that? What can the people do? Bah—nothing!"

"We shall see! They can make you give up my child!"

"They can do nothing of the kind. I am a man of power in Right Bower, and the man has yet to come that can gainsay it. By the way, how did you win the money you just paid me?"

"At the faro-table. The old doctor contributed about half of it."

"Did you have your royal brother here in the game?"

"I did not. Once more, and for the last, Stephen Raymond, I demand my boy!"

"And once more, and for the last, you can't have him without marrying me!"

"We shall see!" Gold Brick cried fiercely. "Ralph, tell me where he is!"

"I can't, sister. I don't know."

"Then, until you find out and restore to me that which you stole from me, I disown and hate you, and it will be better for you to keep from my path."

She spoke fiercely, and there could be no doubting her sincerity.

A villainous flush shot athwart Chester's dusky features.

"Ye needn't be so mighty tart!" he growled. "You remember there's several parties interested in the kid!"

"You'd better never have been born if, through your agency, the boy ever gets into Deadwood Dick's possession."

And with these words he swept from the room.

"What a fool!" Stephen Raymond growled, after she was gone. "She could have a home if she'd marry me. Do you think she will ever go back to the outlaw?"

"No; I'm satisfied they've parted for life."

"Well, what are you going to do? She has thrown you off emphatically enough."

"I'm goin' to find the boy, and speculate on him!"

Raymond laughed evilly.

"I wish you much success in your blind undertaking. When you find the boy, bring him to me, and I will give you more than any one else for him."

"Humph! I'll be apt to sound the market first," Chester growled, as he took his leave.

As the reader has doubtless surmised, Dr. Felix Dorking was none other than our Deadwood Dick, cleverly made up and disguised. The disguise had mysteriously come into his possession, when he was asleep in the mountains, and he had at once put it to use.

With the disguise had come a letter, written in milk or some whitish fluid, which Dick was obliged to warm before he could get at the contents. It read as follows:

"When you want money, apply as before. Find out if Ruth Raymond is Stephen Raymond's own child. If possible, examine her arm, and if you find 'F. F.' pricked in her arm, drop a twenty-dollar gold-piece into the grave."

Farmer's stock in the mine may be offered for sale soon, by the share. Buy it up, unless it goes way up. Run it way up. That may draw out interest. Buy Raymond's, if offered. He has one-third of the whole stock, which lies between him and Farmer, and consists of three thousand shares, all told."

So, as Doctor Dorking, Dick had relocated in Right Bower, and was satisfied that no one suspected his identity, unless it was Raymond; for he felt sure that the mad-dog story was a lie, and that the mine-owner had an object to discover who the doctor was.

That afternoon as the doctor was sitting by a table in Gold Brick's Palace, he saw Raymond enter the room.

An intuition seemed to warn him that mischief was brewing, but he felt less concerned now, than he might have done at another time, from the fact that there were five men scattered about the room, whom he knew he could depend on—men whom he had tried and found true as steel long before Right Bower had any existence. He had met them up in the mountains, digging at a poor claim, and they were glad of the chance to leave their work to serve their old-time master.

However, Raymond gave no evidence of a disposition to create immediate trouble, for he presently approached the doctor, and accosted him:

"Good-afternoon, Doc. Infernally dull about town. What say to a quiet little game of poker?"

"I've no objections, to help while away time," the doctor answered, calling for a fresh pack of cards. "Shall we play for any particular sum?"

"Oh! I'll chance fifty on a game."

"Very well. Fifty dollars a side it shall be!" the doctor asserted, putting up his stake.

The game was played, and the doctor won with ease.

A second, a third, a fourth, and a fifth resulted the same way, the games being quickly played.

Raymond was deeply chagrined, for a considerable number of the habitués of the place were interested spectators. Then, too, to be beaten five straight, without a "smell" for the money he had lost, was annoying to his pride.

"See here, how long is this infernal luck of yours going to last?" he cried, hotly. "I've a notion I can turn it, and

take some of the conceit out of you. See! it is five in the afternoon. I'll play you from now until twelve to-night, for a thousand a side."

Dr. Dorking looked surprised.

"Well, I was going to speculate in stocks, but I don't know but this is as fair a chance. I will take you up at your offer, Mr. Raymond."

"Have you the means to back you through until that time, sir, in case of a reverse of luck?"

"I believe when gentlemen sit down to play for a certain length of time they generally have their cash handy!" was the retort.

"Very well. While you order a fresh deck of cards, I'll step over to my office, and fortify myself," Raymond answered.

He had the amount received from Gold Brick in his pocket; when he returned to the Palace he had as much more added to it, which represented the whole of his cash capital.

Stephen Raymond was a most vain and conceited man in some things. He believed himself an expert at poker, and did not think that in a long fight any man could play with him.

He now knew that the doctor had money, and he meant to play him until he won some of it, for though at first suspecting him to be Deadwood Dick, he had now formed the impression that it was none other than his partner of the Right Bower mines, Jason Farmer, in disguise.

The news of the forthcoming contest between the doctor and the mine-owner spread rapidly, and the Palace was soon crowded, but there was little chance of getting near the table.

Gold Brick was on hand, and kept the spectators at a respectable distance from the players, in order to prevent any annoyance or interruption.

"I propose to raise it to five a side," the doctor suggested. "The idea of so long playing for small stakes is too slow work for me. Five thousand a side, and play until one or the other of us rises from the table, broke."

"Agreed!" Raymond acquiesced.

Then, then initial game was played.

The doctor won.

Again the game was played, and again he won.

A murmur of astonishment ran through the audience.

Raymond looked his chagrin.

"You've something like Deadwood Dick's luck," Gold Brick observed.

"I never was so lucky!" the doctor declared, with a little laugh. "Speaking of Deadwood Dick, I came across a fellow of that name, up in the mountains, on my way here, a fortnight ago.. Had a bullet in his liver, an' was pretty well played out. I couldn't do much for him, and reckon he must have pegged out, after I left him. Your deal on the new game, Mr. Raymond."

"There was no possibility of his getting well?" Raymond queried, at the same time dealing the cards.

"Oh! no, not the least chance!" the doctor replied, disinterestedly.

The game was played very cautiously, but with no different result; the doctor again won.

Not only that game, but twenty more in succession, Raymond never getting a single stake.

"You'd better quit, while you've money left," Gold Brick advised, for the excitement was intense in the room, and the mine-owner was growing flushed and savage.

"When I'm broke, it will be time for you to speak!" he retorted. "Go ahead, Doc!"

"Don't rob yourself, sir, on my account," Dorking smiled. "I am willing to play only so long as you desire, as I really have no great liking for cards."

"Your infernal luck would seem to indicate that they have a liking for you," Raymond growled.

It was something wonderful.

Twenty-eight games, altogether, including the five games of fifty a side, had been played, and the mine-owner had lost every one, making a total loss of over one hundred thousand dollars.

One more game was played, and——

The mine-owner won!

This brightened him up, a great deal, and he called for a bottle of liquor, from which he took several drinks.

"Raise her to ten!" he cried. "The luck has turned at last."

The raise was made, the game played, and Raymond repeated his success.

"I told you luck had changed!" he cried, helping himself to another dose of "medicine."

"Whoop her up to fifty thousand!"

"Anything to accommdoate you—make it a hundred if you like!" the doctor said.

"A hundred it is, then!"

A loud murmur of excitement ran through the room.

This was playing for a fortune—by no means an everyday occurrence in even the loudest gaming-towns of the West.

Following the murmur, breathless silence reigned supreme, as the two men began their play for the great stakes.

Not the least sound disturbed the quiet except the flipping of the cards.

Gold Brick watched the game carefully, but was able to detect no attempt at cheating.

A shout went up!

The doctor had won, and scooped in the big stakes.

Stephen Raymond's face was whiter than any of the Bowerites had ever seen it before, and his hand was nervous as he poured out another glass of whisky.

"Once more," he gritted. "I've ninety-five left. Stake against it."

The game was played.

Again the doctor won.

"I am broke!"

The words were fairly hissed from the mine-owner's lips.

"Yes, Mr. Raymond, you're three hundred thousand out, and it's partly your own fault. Then, too, you must know now, if you didn't before, that you cannot play poker."

"I'll show you yet. Wait until I step down to McTill's, the broker."

"What are you going there for? If you wish to dispose of your stock in the mine, I'll buy it!"

"I wish to secure a loan on it for half an hour. I'll either win back what I have lost, or I will lose all."

"I must refuse to accommodate you then, sir."

"What! you do not refuse to play me?"

"Not when you come to me in your sober senses, and do not get excited and rash, my dear sir."

"Do you mean to insinuate that I am intoxicated, sir?" And Raymond sprung to his feet, hotly.

"You are intoxicated with misfortune—yes. You had better not play any more, for you have lost enough."

Allow me to tell you that you have no show with me at poker, and I did not urge you on to play. So I am not to blame for your losses, and will not play with you again."

"You're a liar and a coward!"

A murmur of astonishment ran through the crowd as Raymond fiercely uttered these words.

"Did I understand you aright?" the doctor asked, arising and transferring his winnings to an inner pocket.

"You heard me!" was the answer, given savagely. "You are a coward and a liar!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a sudden and unexpected leap brought the doctor over the table, and his left hand clutched the mine-owner by the throat, while his right fist struck him a terrible blow on the cheek.

"A liar and a coward, am I?" he cried. "We shall see!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Treachery.

Stephen Raymond struggled in vain to release the doctor's clutch upon his throat, and struck at his enemy blindly.

The doctor, however, dodged the blows, and at the same time proceeded to give the mine-owner's face a sound slapping, the crowd cheering, and enjoying the sport hugely.

Dick finally hurled the mine-owner from him, fiercely, and Raymond landed upon the floor, some distance away.

He sat there a moment as he had fallen, his face betraying all the evil passion of his nature; then, without a word, he arose and shook his fist at the doctor, and left the Palace.

"You better look sharp, doctor—he don't mean you any good," Gold Brick warned, as she stood near him. "He's powerful in Right Bower, and can bring down the whole of the roughs upon you, if he wills it."

"Bah! I am not afraid of him, young lady. I'm only sorry I didn't give him a sounder thrashing."

"Well, I hope you won't get into trouble, sir. You look like too old a man for battling."

"Oh! I am not so young as I once was, but it is not every one who can floor me now."

And the doctor was turning away, but Gold Brick caught him by the arm.

"One moment, please," she said, in a low tone. "Tell me one thing; does my husband still live?"

He looked at her with a stare, then laughed, dryly.

"Your husband?"

"Deadwood Dick. Tell me, is he still alive?"

"Possibly, though there is nothin' certain about it."

"Will you tell me where I can find him?"

"Want to finish the job, eh? No, I can't accommodate you!"

"I don't want to harm him. I want to join with him in making a search for our child. After we recover it, I will take it, and go so far away that nobody will ever hear of us again in our true character."

"I reckon if he gets hold of it, you'll not be apt to float away with it; not if he rightly expressed himself to me!" the doctor said with so much earnestness that he wondered her suspicions were not aroused.

"You won't tell me where he is, then?" she asked pleadingly.

"Nary a time, marm!" now using the mining vernacular. "You've sorter embittered his feelings toward you, I take it, an' ther further ye keep away from him, the better will be the diagnosis of your case."

"Oh! I'm not afraid of him!" she cried, her eyes gleaming. "He knows that. He knows that we have virtually separated forever. I simply wished to join with him in recovering the child."

"Better go it alone, gal. If he gets the child, he's going to keep it, that's flat, and a pointer."

"He shall never have it! I'll kill them both, first!" she cried furiously. "Little Dick shall never go with him!"

"Well, of course you must settle your own disputes!" and the doctor, turning away, left the Palace.

"A trying ordeal!" he muttered when seated in his room at the hotel. "So she wants to join issues long enough to get possession of the child! Ha! ha! that would be right clever, too. I fancy, however, that I can work better alone. If I mistake not, Stephen Raymond will seek me out and try to win back his money. My only plan is to run him down to hard pan, and then play him for the child. I expect I shall have to meet him in duel first, however."

A knock came at the door just then.

"Come in!" the doctor ordered, wondering who it could be.

There seemed to be a moment of hesitation on the part of the party outside; then the door opened, and Stephen Raymond entered.

His face was dark and sullen in expression, and his eyes burned redly.

In his hands he clutched a roll of bills of considerable size.

"I am here!" he said, glaring at the doctor. "I have come to demand satisfaction."

"Certainly," laying a self-cocker on the table. "What way do you want it?"

"Not with weapons more dangerous than poker, just at present. Will you give me a chance to win back at least a part of what I lost at the Palace this afternoon?"

"Only on one condition, Mr. Raymond!"

"Name it, sir!"

"You must retract your words of this afternoon!"

"I cannot do that. We can settle that affair at another time."

"By no means. Either retract, or leave the room!"

"Then, I take back what I said, if that will suit you, and apologize. Now, then, have you a fresh deck of cards?"

"I have. What do you propose to make the object?"

"I have twenty thousand dollars here. I'll stake every cent of it on one game. It shall either be the means of putting me on my feet, or of sending me away from Right Bower a pauper!"

"What! you haven't sold your stock in the mines for that sum?"

"I have mortgaged it to Le Clair, the broker, for one hour!"

"You are foolish. Take your money and go redeem the stock!"

"Never! I'll play you for what I lost!"

"I'd advise you not to—advise you in a friendly way, too!"

"Keep your advice and put up your money."

The doctor covered the hot-headed miner's stake, and the cards were brought into operation.

Raymond played as slowly and deliberately as though his life depended on the issue.

His antagonist played in his usually cool, off-hand manner, not seeming to care particularly which way the game ended.

But, as usual, luck was with him, and he won.

As he raked in the stakes, something like a groan escaped Raymond. His face was very pale, and his eyes had a wild, haggard appearance.

"I am ruined!" he gasped. "I am reduced from a rich man to a beggar. But I won't always be thus. There are ways to get money—yes, there are ways!"

He rose to go, but the doctor caught him by the arm.

"Stay!" he said. "Don't be in too great a hurry. There is still a chance for you to win back a part of what you have lost."

"What do you mean?"

"Sit down and I will explain."

Raymond obeyed somewhat eagerly, for a chance meant much to him even though it might be small.

"Go ahead," he said. "Do not trifle with me or you'll find out it won't pay."

"There is no necessity for trifling. You heard me mention encountering the fellow, Deadwood Dick. Before I left him, he made me promise to search for a lost child of his, which he believed to be in your possession. He wanted me to recover it and care for it as my own."

"Well?"

"You have this child?"

"I am non-committal."

"Bah! it's useless to deny it. The child is of no good to you, more than to speculate on. I'll give you a chance to do so. I'll put up the twenty thousand I just won of you against the child. If you lose you are to deliver the child into my custody."

Raymond was silent a moment, evidently deliberating on what to do.

If he won he would have a stepping-stone toward getting back his old fortune.

If he lost——?

Some dark and evil thoughts entered his head in connection with this latter "if."

"Your stake is too small," he said, finally. "I could not think of parting with my prize for any such money. Make it a hundred?"

"Never!"

"Well, fifty, then. You surely are not afraid to risk that?"

"If you lose will you give me the child?"

"I will. I'll take you to it to-night, and give you possession of it."

"How do I know that I can trust you?"

"You can depend on my word. That is good yet, if I am broke."

"Well, it's settled, then."

The doctor posted his wager, and once more the pasteboards were brought into requisition.

The game was played very slowly and carefully, both men fully intent upon winning.

But it was the same old story. The doctor won and gathered back his stakes without a word.

For a few moments the two men sat eyeing each other, Raymond's face corpse-like in its aspect.

"Are you man or are you devil?" he finally demanded, "for there is something infernal about your luck."

"So it may seem to you, but I assure you I am perfectly human. When will we start after the child?"

Raymond glanced out of the window. It was getting dusk outside, and would soon be dark, for there was no moon and it was raining in a drizzling sort of way.

"I will be ready in half an hour, and meet you on horseback in front of the hotel," he said, rising and leaving the room.

"Scheming knave, what evil plot have you formed in your mind to work me harm?" Dick muttered, when he was alone.

"Some plan, I'll guarantee, that means me no good is hidden beyond my present vision. Ha! ha! you don't mean to yield that child so readily and I know it. I'll be on my guard, you can bet."

Taking his money from about his person, he did it up in a neat package and took it down to the hotel office and left it in the proprietor's care, to be placed in the safe.

If Raymond's object was robbery, he knew this move would baffle him.

Had he had the time, Dick would have taken the money to a more secure hiding place of his own; but he had not,

for by the time his horse was brought around, Raymond was also in waiting.

Looking well to the condition of his belt-weapons, the doctor leaped into his saddle, and together the two galloped out of the camp to the northward.

For an hour they rode along without speaking, following the course of the narrow canyon, which constantly grew rougher and more rocky.

Finally the doctor asked:

"How much further have we to go?"

"It's another good hour's ride yet," was the brief, jerky reply.

"Beware you do not attempt to lead me into a trap, Stephen Raymond! I am prepared, and watching you, and at the first intimation of treachery, I'll send a bullet through your heart!"

"Never fear. You'll have no occasion to do so."

Then they relapsed into silence.

The rain drizzled down heavier, and Dick got wet, having neglected to provide himself with a rubber coat like Raymond.

On they rode, speedily branching off of the main canyon, and ascending a wilder wooded gorge into rough broken mountain country, heavily timbered.

At the end of an hour Dick saw a light twinkling among the trees ahead, and drew rein, at the same time drawing his revolver.

"Hold up. No leading me into traps. Where does that light come from?" he demanded.

"Pshaw. It's only the fire in front of the cave occupied by old Sol Stryker and his wife. There's where the boy is. Come along. No one wants to trick or harm you."

He rode on, and Dick had no choice but to follow; but he was never for a moment off his guard.

They soon drew rein before a small fire of pine cones, which burned under the shelter of a huge overhanging ledge of outcropping rock.

Beyond the camp-fire a cave yawned into the mountain, which was evidently of huge size.

As the two men drew rein, Dick said in a low tone:

"Remember! I am ready to drop you at an instant's notice!"

Just then an old, roughly-dressed and ill-looking moun-

taineer hobbled from the cave, and approached them.

"Is that you, Mister Raymond?" he asked, peering at them sharply. "What in the world brings you out o' setch a stormy night?"

"I've come for the boy, Sol. It belongs to this gentleman henceforth."

"Ye don't tell me! Won't ye dismount, and come inside? I've a fresh fire ready for the lighting, an' there's a drap o' Monongahela in the jug. The old woman's got the chick put to bed, and I 'low it 'll take her sev'ril minutes to git him fixed."

"Just as you say!" Raymond said, turning to the doctor. "A drop of Sol's bug-juice will take off the chill of the rain."

"I don't mind if we do!" was the reply, for having taken a careful look about, Dick had not detected anything suspicious.

Accordingly they dismounted, and entered after the old man, who lit a fresh fire, which cheerily lit the large cave.

There was evidently another apartment, for a slovenly-looking woman made her appearance from what was apparently a natural niche or doorway.

"This way, Mag," old Sold cried, as he brought his guests a couple of stools near to the fire. "Bring out the jug, an' a couple of cups. These gentlemen aire wet, an' want warmin' up."

The woman courtesied, and did as directed, whereupon both the doctor and his guide helped themselves to a portion of the liquor.

"Now, then, get the child ready, and we will be going," Dick ordered.

"Yes, Mag, bundle up the boy well, for it is damp without," added Raymond.

The woman disappeared, but soon returned, carrying a pretty two-year-old boy, who was neatly dressed, and bore the appearance of having been well cared for.

Dick could have snatched him eagerly to his breast and rained kisses upon his fair bright face, but he knew that for the present he must restrain his feelings and keep up his deception.

"Come here, my little fellow," he said, when the woman placed him on the floor. "I like little boys—won't you come see me?"

Something in his tone seemed to disarm the child's hesitation, and it toddled over to him and allowed him to take it upon his knee.

"What is your name, little one?" the doctor asked.

"Dick!" was the lisping reply.

"Dick, eh? Would you like to see your papa?"

"Me want papa--mamma!" the child said, eagerly.

"Will you go with me and find papa, little one?"

"'Es!" was the quick answer. "Me go."

"Then let Maggie bundle you up, and you shall go with me."

The woman then took him, and wrapped him in a blanket.

Strange to say, as young as he was, he seemed to comprehend that he was going to his papa and mamma.

When he was ready, the doctor raised him in his arms, and turned to Raymond, upon whose face was a peculiar smile of triumph.

"Are you ready to go, sir?" Dick asked.

"No, I am not," was Raymond's reply. "I think I shall remain here, awhile. You seem pleased to get your boy once more in your arms, Deadwood Dick?"

And he gave a mocking laugh.

Dick started.

Had the man penetrated his disguise, or was it only a bluff?

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"I mean that you have not deceived me," was the answer. "Under that clever disguise, you are Deadwood Dick; and more, a dozen rifles cover you, from without the cave, held by men who are dead-shots. A single move or attempt to escape or resist, will be your death warrant! It is I who hold the winning hand now, you can bet!"

And Dick could but admit to himself that it looked that way.

CHAPTER IX.

Escape.

For several minutes he said not a word, nor did Raymond, who was watching him with devilish triumph expressed upon his face.

"Prove that I am covered and I'll admit that you hold

one trick in the game," Dick said finally.

Raymond gave a whistle like a bird, and immediately six stalwart mountain roughs marched into the cave, each grasping a repeating-rifle that was cocked and ready for use.

"You see," Raymond chuckled, when they came to a halt, "them's my kings in the game—four kings and an ace, with a jack to spare. How do you like the hand?"

"A possible winning hand, no doubt, in a skin game. May I inquire what you propose to do?"

"Why, invite you to partake of my hospitality for awhile—until it gets light enough to lynch you in the morning. You may as well surrender the child, and let it go to bed."

"Never!" Dick gritted, standing at bay. "The child is mine; it shall never leave me again while I have a strong right arm to defend it!"

"Pshaw! You talk wild. My will is law here. Put down the child, before I have the men riddle you with cold lead."

"Let 'em riddle. I can do some riddling myself!" For he now held a six-shooter in the grasp of his right hand ready for use.

He well knew Raymond would not give the order to fire, for fear little Dick would be killed, and he was prepared to make a desperate resistance in case they tried to overpower him by force of numbers.

"Then you'll not put down the child?"

"Certainly not; and if you try to take it from me, I'll start a cemetery in this place."

Stephen Raymond was too shrewd to doubt the Sport's word. He had heard much of the past history of the Prince of the Road, and knew that at any time he was a bad man to tackle, even with large odds against him.

Therefore, to set his handful of men upon him was likely to be the means of losing part if not all of them, which he was not ready to do when he needed them all.

"Well, I suppose it's better to humor you in this instance," he said finally. "You're going to kick the air in the morning anyhow, and I suppose you can hold your kid, if there is any satisfaction in it."

"You are kind, on finding I am inclined to have my own way!" the doctor remarked, seating himself near the fire once more. "You'll find you had better select a different sort of a man to trifle with, my noble betrayer!"

"Shut up," Raymond growled. "Boys, take your places at the mouth of the cave, and allow no one to pass under penalty of losing your lives!"

The men obeyed, taking turns in pacing to and fro across the entrance.

Raymond turned to old Sol, who was seated by the fire, smoking his grimy pipe.

"What's the matter with you, old man? Why haven't you been to work?" he demanded. "Every stage for two weeks has been fat."

"I've had the rheumatism, so I couldn't lead, an' ther boys wouldn't go it alone. I reckon ye better take charge of 'em, capt'in."

"So I intend to do, temporarily. By the way,"—and he turned to Dick—"suppose you just hand over a matter of money which you won from me to-day?"

"Sorry, but I cannot accommodate you, Raymond. I did not bring it with me, suspecting treachery on your part!"

An oath escaped the outlaw, for such Stephen Raymond really was, and had been, since coming to Right Bower, although Sol Stryker had managed things for him most of the time.

"You are lying to me!" he cried. "You have the money with you!"

"I have not."

"Then it is in your room at the hotel in Right Bower?"

"It is in a safe place," Dick responded, quietly.

"Never mind; I'll find out, and recover possession of it, after you are safely out of my way. Fetch out your liquor, Sol!"

The jug was forthcoming, and after gulping down a large glass of the stuff, Raymond carried the jug to his pals, and treated them.

"Now, boys, remember that fellow is a prisoner, and you are to see he don't escape from the cave, 'twixt now and morning," he said, sternly. "If he gets away I'll shoot every mother's son of you!"

A grunt from the men signified that they had heard his speech.

Raymond then procured a blanket and rolled himself in it, at one side of the cave, and was soon in a drunken sleep.

Old Sol smoked at the fire awhile longer, then going into the inner cave, brought back two thick blankets, and cast them at Dick's feet; then he retreated to the inner apartment, and was seen no more.

Concluding that there was nothing more practicable to do for the present, Dick fixed a comfortable bed for little Dick out of one of the blankets, and rolled himself in the other.

He was in no humor for repose, however, and was on his guard every moment.

The hours dragged by slowly, the fire in the cave burned low, and one of the guards came in to add fresh fuel to it. He was a rough, heavy-bearded fellow, who, it struck Dick, had a familiar look.

"Aire ye awake?" he asked, in a low tone, as he piled on the wood. "Be in readiness, and I'll get you out of this afore morning."

"All right!" Dick answered, considerably surprised and puzzled.

The man went back to the cave entrance, and did duty as sentinel. The other men were lying about, evidently snatching a little sleep while a chance afforded.

Outside the cave the rain now came down steadily and heavily, while the wind moaned dismally through the pines.

"A good night for escape, if I can once get outside the cave!" Dick mused. "If they have taken my horse, I can do all the better."

An hour passed. He began to get uneasy lest Raymond should awaken from his drunken sleep.

Finally he saw the sentinel motion for him to approach. Stealthily rising, he tenderly raised little Dick in his arms, and stole toward the mouth of the cave.

In two minutes they were past the dozing guards, and out in the pouring rain, then the sentinel said:

"Follow me, now. We must get far from here before our escape is discovered, or there'll be fighting to do."

"Who are you, that I have to thank?" Dick asked, wrapping his child up to keep it from getting wet.

"Never mind; I am a friend. Call me Jack, if anything. Shall I guide you to your own camp?"

"Yes, if you know where it is."

The other gave a little laugh—he evidently was well acquainted with its location.

This surprised Dick, for he believed its existence known only to himself and his five men—for it was in a secluded mountain glen, walled in on four sides, and accessible only by a narrow, fissure-like ravine.

Here it was his men were to rendezvous when not in Right Bower, and he doubted not he would find them there to-night.

The walk was long and tedious, but Dick felt as if he could have walked on, for days at a time, now that he had possession of his boy.

They reached the glen a couple of hours before day-break, and found Dick's comrades there. They had built a serviceable cabin, and within this, cosy shelter was found from the rain.

Soon after their arrival, Jack, the guide, turned up missing, and inquiry of the guard at the entrance to the glen elicited the information that he had gone, for sure.

"A strange fellow," Dick muttered. "Something seems to tell me that I have met him before, and yet I cannot tell where."

After arranging little Dick comfortably where he could finish his sleep, Dick glanced at his watch and said:

"I must be off, at once, for, if possible, I want to reach Right Bower before Raymond does. Remain here and see that no one enters the glen or sees my boy. I will return as soon as I can. Look smart after the little one, and make friends with him."

Then carefully inspecting his weapons, he left the cabin, and the glen.

It was three miles to Right Bower, and Dick had fears that he would not arrive there ahead of Raymond. If he did not, he felt sure that Raymond would expose him, and then it would be a question how he could recover the money he had left in care of the hotel-keeper.

Swiftly he hurried along, and succeeded in making the camp before daybreak.

The street was deserted, and the bar and office of the Palmer House were the only places open.

Creeping stealthily near to the hotel, Deadwood Dick gained the veranda and looked in.

Stephen Raymond had already arrived, and sat nodding in a chair in the bar-room.

The night clerk was also half-asleep in the office.

Dick took in the situation at a glance.

"I'll have to sail in and get the package now or never!" he muttered. "There's only two of 'em, if it comes to a scratch!"

He stole into the office and touched the dozing clerk on the shoulder, at the same time presenting his six-shooter to his gaze.

"'Sh! Make a sound, and I'll blow your brains out!" Dick hissed, warningly. "D'ye hear me?"

The terrified clerk nodded, glancing toward the bar-room.

"Don't you dare attempt to warn him," Dick cautioned. "Your life depends on how you obey me. Open that safe and give me the package that belongs to me. Quick! I've no time to waste! Death to you if you refuse."

The clerk was not old in the mines, and not over-courageous, and he made nervous haste to open the safe and deliver up the package, which Dick received with a smile.

"Just give my respects to Raymond, the road-agent, there, will you?" he said. "I'll see him when I have more time," and with a laugh, he leaped out into the night and was gone.

This laugh aroused Stephen Raymond, and he leaped to his feet, excitedly.

"What was that, Dunby?"

"The doctor, sir. He came, surprised me, and forced me to give him a package from the safe."

"Curses on your infernal stupidity! Why didn't you tell me the money was in the safe?" Raymond roared, furiously. "Speak up, curse you!"

"I didn't know about it, sir, till he demanded a package from the safe. He took me all by surprise, sir."

"You're an idiot. Give me some whisky. I'll have revenge on some one for this."

He swallowed a huge drink, and then, without paying for it, rushed from the hotel, more like a madman than a sane person.

"I'll take my spite out on some one," he raved. "There's the girl; she's nothing to me, and I've treated her too fine. It's time I broke her proud spirit."

A line of light came from under the door of the little shanty where Gold Brick made her home, at such times as she was not at the Palace.

Within, two persons sat at the table, on which burned a candle.

One was Old Avalanche, the veteran Annihilator; the other was Gold Brick, alias Calamity Jane.

Grim, somber expressions were upon both faces, the Annihilator's being more so than usual, while there were traces of tears about the young woman's eyes.

"Yas, thar's no two ways about it," the old man was saying; "you've bin actin' up like a darned ejit, an' no one's to blame but yerself. Ef thet consarned loafin' coyote uv a brother o' yourn war sunk out o' sight in a Texas quicksand, I'd give all ther spondulics this old hulk is wuth, an' that ain't a few."

"Abuse him, if you like!" Calamity replied, coldly. "He is just what he is, and he is my brother—the only relative left of my family. Do you suppose I am going to see him gobbled up by the law?"

"Ye'd better git him out o' this camp, or some one asides the law wull gobble him up. I would not blame Dicky a bit if he popped him over, furst opperchunity!"

Calamity Jane's eyes snapped.

"Maybe he had better try it. If I am not mistaken, he's past doing any one harm."

"Bah! great antiquated ham-bone that discombobberated the larynx uv old Joner! That bullet o' yourn war no more than a flea-bite ter him."

"The doctor said he was dying up in the mountains. I tried to find out where, but he wouldn't tell me."

"'Ca'se the doctor and Dicky breathed thru' the same wind-pipe!"

"I don't believe it."

"I do. Ye say the Doc cleaned Raymond out o' all he was worth?"

"True. No man but Deadwood Dick could play such a game of poker. I've learned since that Raymond sold his stock in the mine, and the doctor scooped in the cash he got for that!"

"Yas, an' ye see'd 'em ride off tergether to-night, at dusk!"

"Well?"

"I'll wager ten dollars ag'in a mate ter my goat, Jerry-miah, thet they played fer the kid!"

Calamity Jane turned pale.

"Great heaven! It is only too probable. Raymond would never give up the boy, tho'!"

"Can't tell. Mebbe the thing was bindin'."

"Avalanche, you make me nearly crazy. What shall be done? You promised me to stand by me."

"Ef ye'd give up that brother, gall!"

"Well, I have half made up my mind to do so—unless he should restore me the boy; then I'm bound to see him through!"

"Thar can't be no 'ifs' nor 'ands' 'bout it, C'lamity. I sed I'd stan' by ye, an' not let ye cum ter harm, but I can't hev no sech galouts as Ralp Chester hangin' ter yer skirts. Ye opine thar can't never be no reconciliation 'twixt you an' Dick?"

"Of course not. After what has passed, he'd never have anything to do with me, and I'd never ask him to. All I want is my child, and a father's home with you. I'll give up this wild life."

"Ye'll scoot Chester, then?"

"Practically, yes. He has his orders, now—never to approach me as a brother, until he brings me my boy. I'll not see him harmed, though. Hush!"

A knock at the door.

It was not like a man's rap.

"Who's there?—what's wanted?" Calamity demanded.

"For God's sake let me in!" a woman's voice cried, in pitiful accents.

CHAPTER X.

Bug-Juice Buys Stocks.

"It must be Miss Raymond or else a stranger. Open the door, Avalanche!" Calamity ordered.

The Annihilator obeyed, and admitted no less a personage than Ruth Raymond.

She was a sight to behold. Her dress was torn in several places, her nose was bleeding, as were several

scratches upon her hands and wrists, and her hair was disheveled.

"What is the matter, Miss Raymond?" Calamity cried, springing to her feet, and getting a basin of water. "How come you in this plight?"

"You will be surprised when you hear," was the answer. "I will tell you, in a few moments."

Application of water soon stopped her nose from bleeding, and she then seated herself, and gazed from one to the other.

"Stephen Raymond did this!" she said. "He came home awhile ago in an intoxicated condition, and ordered me to get up and dress. Fearing to disobey, I did so, when he swore at me, said I was not his daughter, and that he was going to kill me. He knocked me down and kicked me, brutally, and I think he would have carried out his threat, only that I struggled to my feet, hit him with a chair, and then fled from the building, and wandered here. Oh! what shall I do? I never saw him as he is now. He will kill me if he finds me!"

"Oh! but I reckon he won't, while I'm on terra firma!" Calamity said. "You stay right here, and I will look out for you."

"Oh! but you are too kind. I am so grateful to you. Do you think he will come here in search of me?"

"I reckon not. If he does, I'll send him away mighty quick. He's off his base to-night, 'cause he lost every dollar he had in the world at cards!"

"What! does he gamble?"

"Something like three hundred thousand dollars' worth yesterday—for it is now a new day!"

"You spoke of his claiming you were not his daughter?" Old Avalanche said. "What do you make of that?"

"I believe it to be true, sir," Ruth responded, "although I have lived with him ever since I can remember, I have reason to believe I am not his daughter, from the fact that I bear india-ink initials, worked in my arm, that are different from my present name."

"I can put you at rest in regard to this matter," Calamity asserted. "You are not Stephen Raymond's daughter, nor are you in any way related to him. I know who you are and who your parents are!"

"Oh! then you will tell me?" Ruth cried eagerly,

"Possibly I may do so, although I have sworn to maintain secrecy in the matter. You can remain under my charge for the present, and I will consider."

"Oh! dear lady, if you will only tell me who I am, and where I can find my real parents, I will be so thankful!"

"Very likely I may do so, ere long. For the present, you had best confine yourself to the next room, so that no chance caller may see you here."

Ruth accordingly entered the little sleeping apartment, and closed the door.

Calamity then turned to Avalanche, who had risen, evidently to take his departure.

"What! not going?"

"Yes. I must get out of the camp before day dawn, for there might be trouble were I seen here."

"Perhaps you are right. I shall depend on you to do what you can for me."

"On course, gal, on course, but thar's one thing ye mustn't expect o' me!"

"What?"

"'Bout the boy—I can't hev nothin' to do at capterin' 'im!"

"Why not—pray?"

"Ca'se I'd be goin' back on Dickey, and he'd never forgive me. No! no! I'll stan' by ye, gal, but I can't take no han' in capterin' the kid!"

"You are too conscientious!" Calamity declared. "I don't see how you are going to serve Deadwood Dick and me at the same time."

"I'm not sarvin' him—but I don't keer to do nothin' ter win his ill-will, which I would be doin' ef I had a hand in the kid case."

"Well, I suppose if you won't, you won't. I fancy it won't take long to run down the game if the child is in Deadwood Dick's possession."

Avalanche left the shanty without answering.

The next morning Stephen Raymond caused it to be known throughout the camp how cleverly the Right Boweries had been swndled by Deadwood Dick as the pseudo-doctor.

The excitement was intense, and Raymond found a few to sympathize with him over his large losses; but that did

not subdue the fire, and he drank heavily, having sold his house for enough to keep him in liquor money for a time.

During the forenoon St. Clair, the broker, hung out a red flag and notice that the stock of the Bonanza mines, lately owned by Stephen Raymond, would be auctioned off that afternoon to the highest bidder, to repay advances made.

When the hour came for the sale, the crowd was so large that it was found necessary to hold the sale out of doors.

About this time there appeared upon the street a diversion, as it were, in the person of a full-fledged bull-whacker. He was a man of but medium stature, but a typical mountain tough in appearance. He was dressed in stogy boots, greasy patched breeches, a dirty red shirt, and a battered plug hat, full of bullet-holes. His belt contained three revolvers and a knife of huge pattern, and in his hand he carried a dangerous-looking bull-whip, which he would occasionally crack with emphasis, and give a wild yell for accompaniment.

A whisky bottle protruded from either pocket of his pants, and it was evident that he was out on a "bender." His face was well covered with reddish beard, and his hair was of a like color. His nose was cherry red upon the end and the balance of it was patched over with court-plaster. His eyes were dark and shrewd.

"Auction, hey?" he yelled, as he came prancing along down the street to where St. Clair had just mounted a dry goods box. "What's goin' ter sell? Spiel out, fer hyer's old Bug-juice Bill, ther Terror o' Tombstone, as wants ter dip right inter specillation, an' then hev a good old fight wi' sum festive galoot afterwards, ef ther's enny fi'tin' stock in ther camp. W'at ye g'wine ter sell, cap-ting?"

"One thousand shares in the Farmer gold mine!" St. Clair explained. "Gents, I offer for your consideration Stephen Raymond's late interest in the Farmer-Raymond Mining Concern, consisting of one thousand shares. You all know the prosperous condition of the mines, and I assure you that this is a rare chance to invest, as this is the only stock not owned by old Farmer. Were he here he would doubtless gobble it up in short order. To accommodate those of moderate means, I will sell ten shares

at a time, with a privilege of a hundred or more. Now, how much do I hear a share? Bid lively, gents—never git another chance like this for a paying investment!

"I'll give ten cents a share!" roared the bull-whacker, clambering up on a flour barrel. "Ten cents I start her at—me, Bug-juice Bill, ther Terror o' Tombstone!"

"You will confer a favor by keeping quiet, sir. How much did you say, Mr. Dunn?"

"Fifteen dollars!"

"Started at fifteen dollars a share. Who'll make it twenty? Going at fifteen, who'll make it twenty?"

"I'll give twenty-five!" shouted the bullwhacker, with a flourish.

"Fifteen, who'll make it twenty?" shouted St. Clair, paying no attention to him.

"Twenty-five, I say!" yelled Bug-juice.

"See here, man, are you going to keep quiet?" St. Clair cried.

"No, I ain't!" retorted the bullwhacker. "I bid twenty-five dollars a share fer ther stock ye're offerin', an' I don't want yer ter fergit it. My bid's just as gud as next one!"

"Man, you haven't got two hundred and fifty dollars to your name!"

"You're a liar, an' I kin lick blazes outen yer. I kin buy ther hull town ef I takes er notion!" and Bug-Juice Bill waved a fist-full of greenbacks in the air. "I'm bid-din' twenty-five a sheer fer ther stock o' the Bonanza mine. Does ary galoot wanten see me an' go me better?"

"Twenty-five dollars is offered! Who'll make it thirty?" shouted St. Clair. "This is a cash sale, gents!"

"Thirty!" from Mr. Dunn.

"I'll go ten better!" cried a St. Louis speculator.

"Hyer's what'll fetch her a boomin' up ter fifty!" cried the bullwhacker. "Oh! ye needn't look goggle-eyed at me, Mr. Auctioneer, fer Bug-Juice Bill hes jest got ther collateral ter back his yawp, every day in a week. Hain't bin knockin' 'round ther West fer years all fer nothin' you bet!"

"Fifty dollars a share is offered, gents—a very low sum I assure you. Why, the stock would double that on the Eastern market. You are not offering forty per cent. of the actual value, I assure you!"

"Sixty!" from Mr. Dunn.

"Sixty-five!" from the St. Louis party.

"Seventy!" from a Chicagoan.

"Seventy-five!" from St. Louis.

"Eighty!" from Chicago.

"See hyer!" broke in Bug-Juice Bill, "düz a galoot hev ther privilege o' the hull thousan' shares fer spot cash an' top bid?"

"He does," St. Clair replied, eagerly, for he was in a fair way to make a big thing on his loan to Stephen Raymond.

"Then jest knock ther hull caboodle down to me fer a hundred dollars a share."

There was a momentary silence. St. Clair turned to the other bidders:

"Well, gents, what do I hear? Any of you anything to say?"

The three men shook their heads.

"Last call! A hundred dollars is offered. Who will raise it?"

No answer.

"Sold to Bug-Juice Bill for one hundred dollars. How many shares will you take, sir?"

"The hull thousand!"

"Then step over to the office and we will settle."

Bug-Juice William flapped his arms to his side, gave vent to a crow, and gazed around over the crowd.

"Feller-citizens, I shall hev ter tear myself away fer a few minnits; but I won't be gone long!" he announced.

"Prisently will I be amongst you ag'in, an' ef ther's ary galoot as wants ter climb me, by way o' gittin' 'quainted, I'm jest ther gentle Zephyr as wull be happy to chew off his nose!"

And with this remark, Bug-Juice dismounted from his perch, and followed St. Clair into the office—the broker locking the door to keep out the curious.

"What shall I make your name in transferring this stock?" the broker asked, when they were seated, and the bullwhacker began counting out the money.

"Jason Farmer!" was the reply. "I bought in the stock for him."

St. Clair stared.

He had been wondering what it all meant.

The transfer was soon made, and Bug-Juice Bill took his departure.

Almost the first person he met was Stephen Raymond. The man was well soaked with liquor, and had the appearance of an ugly wolf.

"See here!" he cried, "I hear you bought in that stock of mine."

"Yer bet! What yer got ter say ter it?"

"This much—that you'll never live to profit by it!" and without another word he hurried on.

Bug-Juice Bill continued on up the street, occasionally bursting forth into a boisterous song; now and then taking a nip from one of his bottles!

Singing at the top of his voice, he reached the hotel, when he was suddenly given a slap in the face, which at once stopped his music, and at the same time caused him to reel backward to the ground.

He was on his feet in a minute, however, and glanced around him.

"Who applied his palm to my mouth jest then?" he roared; "war et you?"

And he fixed his gaze on Ralph Chester, who, half drunk and in a bad humor, stood near at hand.

"Yes, I slapped you, and I don't want to hear any more of your music around here!" the gambler growled.

"Ye don't, eh? Yer don't want ter hear anuther squawk from my bird-like beak, eh?"

"No, I don't."

"Who aire ye? Does ary one know ye around heer?"

"I reckon so."

"Got credit fer a coffin, eh? Waal, thats good. You've got ter fite. D'ye know whom you've insulted? Bug-Juice Bill, ther Terror frum Tombstone—ther great blood-puddin' o' ther Nor'west. I'm bad, and I'm goin' ter kill ye!"

"You're a big blatter. Ef you want to fight, square off!"

And the gambler aimed a terrible blow at the bull-whacker, which was neatly parried, and the next minute Ralph Chester lay outstretched upon the ground, having received a blow full between the eyes.

He leaped to his feet, only to be knocked back upon the ground again.

Three times he essayed to stand up before his enemy,

but each time the result was the same.

As he arose a fourth time, grasping a pistol, there came the report of a weapon—but not from Chester. Calamity Jane had fired from the door of the Palace.

The bullwhacker turned in time to see her, the bullet having grazed his shoulder.

He smiled, and turned just in time to escape a bullet from Chester's pistol.

Springing upon the wretch, he tore the weapon from his grasp, and knocked him down with the butt of it.

"Next time I'll settle with you for good," he cried, turning away. "Keep your distance, if you wish to live."

He then entered the hotel, and procured his supper.

Afterward he smoked a cigar upon the veranda, when he was approached by the man, Jack, who had previously rescued him—for the reader must have guessed that Bug-Juice was Deadwood Dick in another disguise.

"The devil's to pay!" Jack said, in a low tone.

"How do you mean?"

"Raymond's gang has been reinforced by fifty rustlers, and they're going to pounce down on the town to-night, and fire and plunder it. You're known, and you want to scoot!"

"Bah! I'll not go! What hour is the attack to be made?"

"About ten o'clock."

"All right."

He arose, and going to the end of the veranda, began to shout. In a few minutes he had a large audience.

"Gents!" he cried. "I have just learned through a spy, that a gang of rustlers, headed by Stephen Raymond, will pounce down on this camp to-night to plunder and burn it. Immediate action must be taken to give these devils a warm reception. Behold! I am the man for the business of taking the lead—I am Deadwood Dick, ever ready to fight for the right! Shall I lead you in this matter?"

A murmur ran through the crowd; then a shout arose:

"Death to the rustlers! Hurrah for Deadwood Dick, our captain!"

And from that moment Dick knew he had scored his biggest deal in the game he had undertaken to play.

CHAPTER XI.

The Deciding Game.

Without delay he set to work perfecting his plans for giving the rustlers a warm reception.

Consulting with Jack, he learned that it was their intention to attack from the northern approach to the camp, and it was likely they would make a dash into the thickest part of the camp first.

He therefore ordered all hands to arm fully, and secrete themselves in the shanties bordering on the street, from which they could pour a destructive and continuous volley into the rustlers' ranks as they dashed down into the town.

A number of men were to remain about the street to prevent suspicion being aroused, but were to take to cover when the first shot was fired.

Dick had thrown off his disguise, and was here, there, and everywhere, arranging his plans, and his prompt action was well received, even by those who had at first been inclined to distrust him.

"Things are working well!" Jack, the guide, said, as he kept close to Dick's side wherever he went.

"There is only one thing wrong."

"What?" Dick asked, quickly.

"Raymond's daughter is missing."

"What of it? What interest have you in her welfare?" and the Sport eyed him suspiciously.

"A great deal. I cannot tell you now, but will later."

"See here," and Dick laid his hand on the man's shoulder; "you are no longer an enigma. You are Chet Rossitur!"

"'Sh! Don't mention the name! Chet Rossitur is dead—that is, so far as such a man ever existed. Enough of this now, however. You have served me well, and shall not lose by it. I'll be near you during the evening, and see you later."

When he had all arranged, Deadwood Dick dropped into the Palace. But a few men were in the place, and they were armed and waiting for the attack.

Gold Brick (otherwise Calamity Jane) was presiding behind the bar.

Sauntering up, Dick called and paid for a cigar in the same indifferent way as if they had never met before.

"Your aim was unsteady to-night," he remarked dryly.

"I did not aim to kill; I merely wished to stop the quarrel!" she retorted.

"You'd better hide the fellow. I shall drop him at first provocation."

She did not answer, but her eyes emitted a gleam that did not imply good will.

The rustlers' were prompt.

At about ten o'clock a party of fifty-five horsemen dashed into the camp, to be welcomed by volley after volley of bullets poured into their midst from either side of the street, thinning their numbers terribly. The riders returned fire, and the air was discordant with oaths and shouts of vengeance.

But they were fairly caught, and the further they dashed on into town the worse they got it, until so great was their loss that the order "scatter" was yelled out, and they took to flight in every possible direction.

Then when the citizens poured forth into the street once more, the cry of "Hurrah for Deadwood Dick!" was taken up and shouted until the very gulch walls seemed to catch the spirit of enthusiasm and echoed and re-echoed the cry.

A look over the battlefield showed that fully two-thirds of the attacking party had been shot down.

Deadwood Dick came to where Jack was kneeling beside Stephen Raymond, who was not yet dead.

"Help me to take him to one side. I must find something out ere he dies," the man said.

They raised him and took him away.

In due time they came to a dimly moonlit spot, where they were not likely to be disturbed. He was still conscious, and eyed them anxiously, evidently fearing that they intended to use violence.

"You were a little too cute, but it's all on his account," with a savage scowl at Jack.

"Yes, it's all on my account," Jack replied. "I joined your gang for the sole purpose of hounding you down to death, and I will do so, if I have not already. Where are you shot?"

"In a fatal place. I'm not long for this world."

Jack tore the beard from his face, for it was false, leaving a perfectly smooth countenance, that belonged to a man of fifty years.

Raymond and Deadwood Dick both uttered exclamations of surprise.

"Jason Farmer!" the former gasped, paling. "I have long suspected you were not far away."

"Then you were right. As Chet Rossitur I was here some time ere I had St. Cecil, alias Deadwood Dick, come to represent me. As Rossitur I entered him into my service, and behold the result, your ruin, and vengeance for himself, as well as for me!"

Raymond made no answer.

The millionaire turned to Dick.

"Mr. Harris, a little explanation is due to you, whom I have used as a tool, in one sense, to bring this wretch to his fate.

"Years ago Stephen Raymond and I were rivals in love, but I was the victor by winning the object of our mutual choice. A little girl baby blessed our union, and when I fancied myself one of the happiest of men, this man struck me a blow. Through his instrumentality my wife was murdered, and my child stolen. Raymond also disappeared, and I never heard of him afterward until about a year ago, when my agent sold an interest in this mine to him. I then found that I was in partnership with my old enemy, and began to get ready to wreak vengeance upon him. I have that, now. Ruined and run to the death, Stephen Raymond, I cannot ask for more vengeance on you. All I want is my child."

"Find her!" was the grim reply.

"Where is she?"

"I don't know—neither do I care. I drove her from my house last night, and I care not where she is. The game is up, and I pass."

He died without speaking again.

Dick and Jason Farmer then turned away.

"I must seek my camp now," Dick said, "and if I find

everything all right, I'll return to help you search for your daughter."

"Very well, sir. But first come with me. You bought in the stock, I hear, even though I did not give the directions. You did right. You were still acting in my interests. You shall lose nothing by serving me as you have."

He led the way to the Rossitur cabin, and they entered.

Procuring a lantern and lighting it, the millionaire mine-owner raised a trap-door in the floor and descended a ladder, bidding Dick to follow him.

They soon stood in a huge cellar, which extended far beyond the cabin in the direction of the grave.

"The grave," Farmer went on to explain, "is really a part of the cellar, done off to suit the purpose I intended it for. I found a dead miner, and worked him to answer in my place. I dogged you constantly, and when you wanted money you got it."

"I did. Did you fight with Gold Brick, as you were to do?"

"I stood up and let her shoot at me, and played off dead. She never approached me after I fell. But come; for you know enough about this. The light in the grave was produced by prepared phosphorus."

They ascended to the cabin and became seated at the table.

"Now, then, to settle up. How much do I owe you?"

"Nothing. Here is the certificate of the stock, and two hundred and twenty thousand dollars."

And he laid the money and paper on the table.

Jason Farmer crammed them into his vest pocket, and took a compact package from his coat pocket.

"There. Take that. Don't look at it until you need it," he said. "If you ever need more, you know I live up in Helena."

Then, rising, he blew out the light and left the cabin, Dick doing likewise.

From the cabin Dick struck out for the glen, which he made in good time. Everything was all right, and little Dick fast asleep, having passed a merry day at play; so Dick made up his mind to return to the mining town and assist in the search for Mr. Farmer's daughter.

"Tom, if a wandering girl should stray this way, take her into camp and see that she is properly cared for until

"I return!" he ordered the sentry, as he passed out of the glen.

He then hurried toward town, wholly unconscious that he was shadowed, nearly all the whole distance, by no less a person than Calamity Jane.

Arrived in Right Bower, she sought her cabin, and found Ruth evidently waiting her return.

"Come," Calamity said. "I have everything mapped out. You are to apply for protection in the outlaw's camp. When all is quiet you are to get the child and fetch it to me. I'll have the guard quieted, and we can escape back here, when you shall know your parentage."

"Oh! you will not deceive me?"

"No, certainly not, if you do as I direct."

"Oh, I suppose I have no choice but to obey you, but I can't make it seem that this is right."

"Pshaw! quiet your conscience on that score. Come! we must be going."

We will pass over the journey to the vicinity of the glen, where Ruth left her companion and pushed on into the fissure, until the challenge "halt!" rung out.

"Who comes there?" Tom Dare called out.

"I am Ruth Raymond, and I am lost in the mountains."

"Then, come forward, Miss Raymond, and you shall be welcome to our camp until morning."

And the sentry ushered Ruth into the glen, and to the cabin, leaving the pass unguarded long enough for Calamity to steal into the glen and secrete herself near the cabin, the door of which was open, the night being warm.

After providing for Ruth's comfort by awarding her a resting place on a couch of skins, Tom Dare returned to his sentry-post, his companions rolling themselves in their blankets for the night, outside the cabin, out of respect for Ruth.

In an hour they were asleep, and by stealing near, Calamity was rejoiced to note that Ruth had fallen asleep.

For the eager mother to steal into the cabin and secure her child was now but the work of a moment, and she gained the outside without discovery.

To get by Tom Dare was the next thing.

Fortunately what young moon there was in the heavens was under a cloud, and the darkness enabled her to get quite close to him without being seen.

"Strikes me it's very quiet over at the cabin," she heard him mutter. "I've a notion to run over and see ef everything's all right."

And he tramped off.

In an instant Calamity improved the advantage, and her nimble feet had carried her far from the glen ere Tom had discovered the abduction of Little Dick and given the alarm.

One of the men started at once for Right Bower, and Dick received the bad news and Mr. Farmer the good news of his daughter's safety, as the two were standing on the hotel steps.

"She shall not have him long!" Deadwood Dick muttered.

Knowing well Calamity would return to Right Bower before leaving that part of the territory, he disguised himself cleverly and watched and waited.

He also had his comrades on the watch, but all to no purpose. She did come one night, on the sly, and procured some money from the Palace and then escaped.

Dick half suspected that she and Old Avalanche were on good terms, and so one day he made a stealthy approach to the old Annihilator's cabin, but found only the old scout and his goat there.

"Avalanche," the sport said sternly, "you have been playing me false. Where are Calamity and the boy?"

"Great ham-bone, Dick, I can't tell you no more'n I kin tell fortin's."

"Were they here?"

"Yas. I wanted her ter give me the chick, but she refused and left."

"Which way?"

"Nor'west."

"Do you know of any objective point she had in view?"

"Nary!"

"Well, I'll search. Was that coyote with her?"

"Yes. She could 'a' had a home wi' me, but she wouldn't discard him. He's a bad egg!"

"If we ever meet, I'll try to relieve her of her care of him."

He went back then to Right Bower, and getting his five trusty companions together, he faced for the northwest.

For days they rode, until they came to a newly-struck

mining camp, where "Loom" was just getting a grip.

"We'll camp here," Dick announced, for he was disguised. "It strikes me this place may pan out what I want."

A week passed, however, before they made any "graft."

Then it was only by Dick's chancing to drop into a gaming saloon and noticing that the red beard of a newly arrived player was false.

He took up a position where he could watch, and gave his pals a signal to follow when he left.

When the red-bearded man arose and left the place, after winning largely, Deadwood Dick left also. Unseen, he dogged him from the town and to a newlybuilt shanty half a mile below.

Satisfied he had struck a lead, the Sport then set Tom Dare to watch the place.

The next day Tom came in with the report that he had seen Chester and Calamity about the shanty.

"We'll call upon 'em to-night," Dick said. "They evidently have no idea we are here."

Such proved to be the case, for when they suddenly pounced down upon the place that night, the door was open and the two were at supper, but the child was not visible.

Calamity arose with a pale face as Dick and his men filed into the shanty.

"Sir!" she cried, "in what way am I indebted for this honor?"

"In no way, further than one thief is indebted to another," was Dick's response. "Good fortune, it seems, put me on the right trail, and I am here to negotiate for the possession of my son."

"Negotiate!" She uttered a hard laugh. "I perhaps don't catch your meaning."

"Evidently not. I will try to make it plainer. Of course I could have come here and demanded the child, and if needs be have taken it by force. Such a plan don't seem hardly necessary. As man and wife a separation has taken place between us, and you'll acknowledge it but natural that each should desire the custody of our child."

"Very likely. Go on."

"As this matter of abduction is not desirable, I propose we decide here, for good and all, who keeps the boy, and

It is hereby understood as binding as an oath, that the other party forever forego all claim upon said child."

"How do you propose to decide the question, sir?"

"By a game of cards."

"And if I refuse to agree to this?"

"I shall then have to take the child by force, whereas by the other way you have a fair chance to win him."

"Very well, it shall be decided so. If I lose I am to forego all claim to the child and never cross your path? If you lose, you are so to do?"

"Exactly!"

"Ralph, bring the child."

Little Dick was brought from an adjoining room.

Then the husband and wife, in name only, sat down at the table to gamble for their boy.

The game was eucher, and Calamity dealt first.

The game was short and quick, but watched with great interest.

Deadwood Dick won.

Calamity lost every trace of color as she arose from the table, with revolver in hand, which she pressed against her breast.

One of Dick's men quickly dashed it aside and the bullet pierced Ralph Chester's heart.

With a wild cry, Calamity fell in a swoon over the body of her evil brother.

Dick seized his boy then and left the place forever.

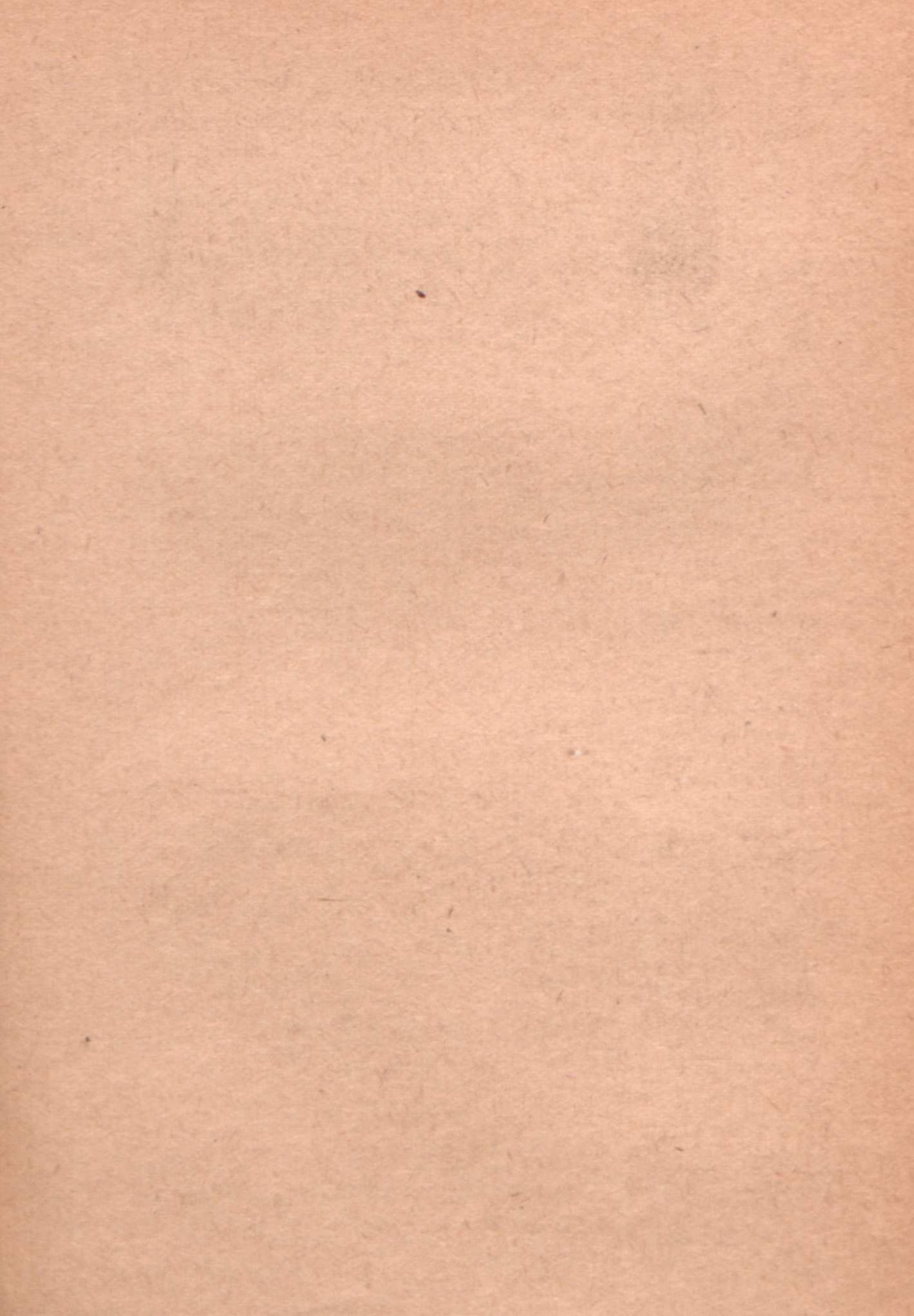
Ruth proved to be the lost Flora Farmer, and is now a belle and the "catch" of Helena society.

Calamity Jane—wild, sad-eyed, yet reckless and daring—is often heard of in the West.

Of Deadwood Dick we may hear again; but one thing seems certain—his and Calamity's paths in life henceforth lead wide apart.

Old Avalanche still hovers about the mines.

THE END.



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